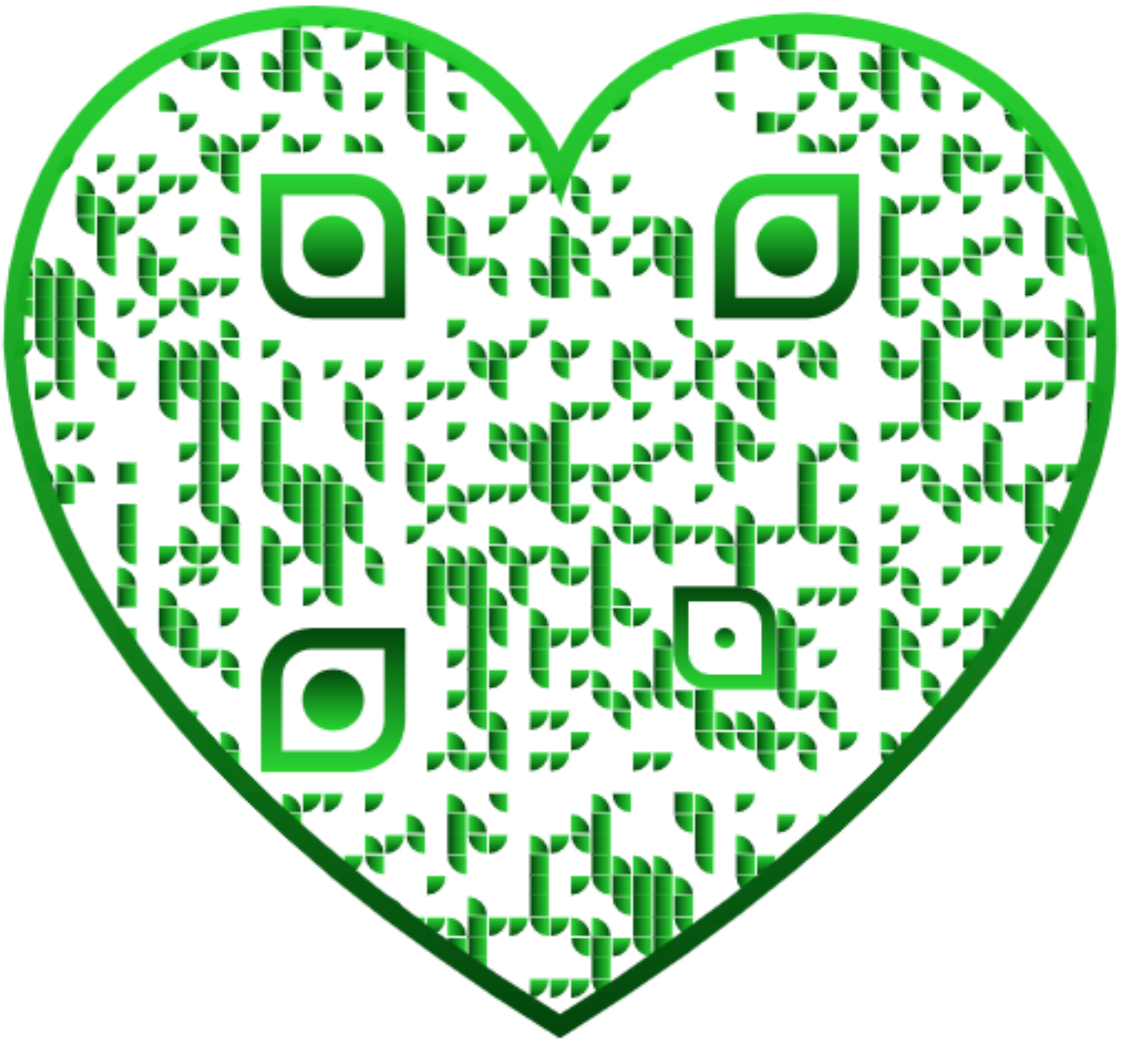
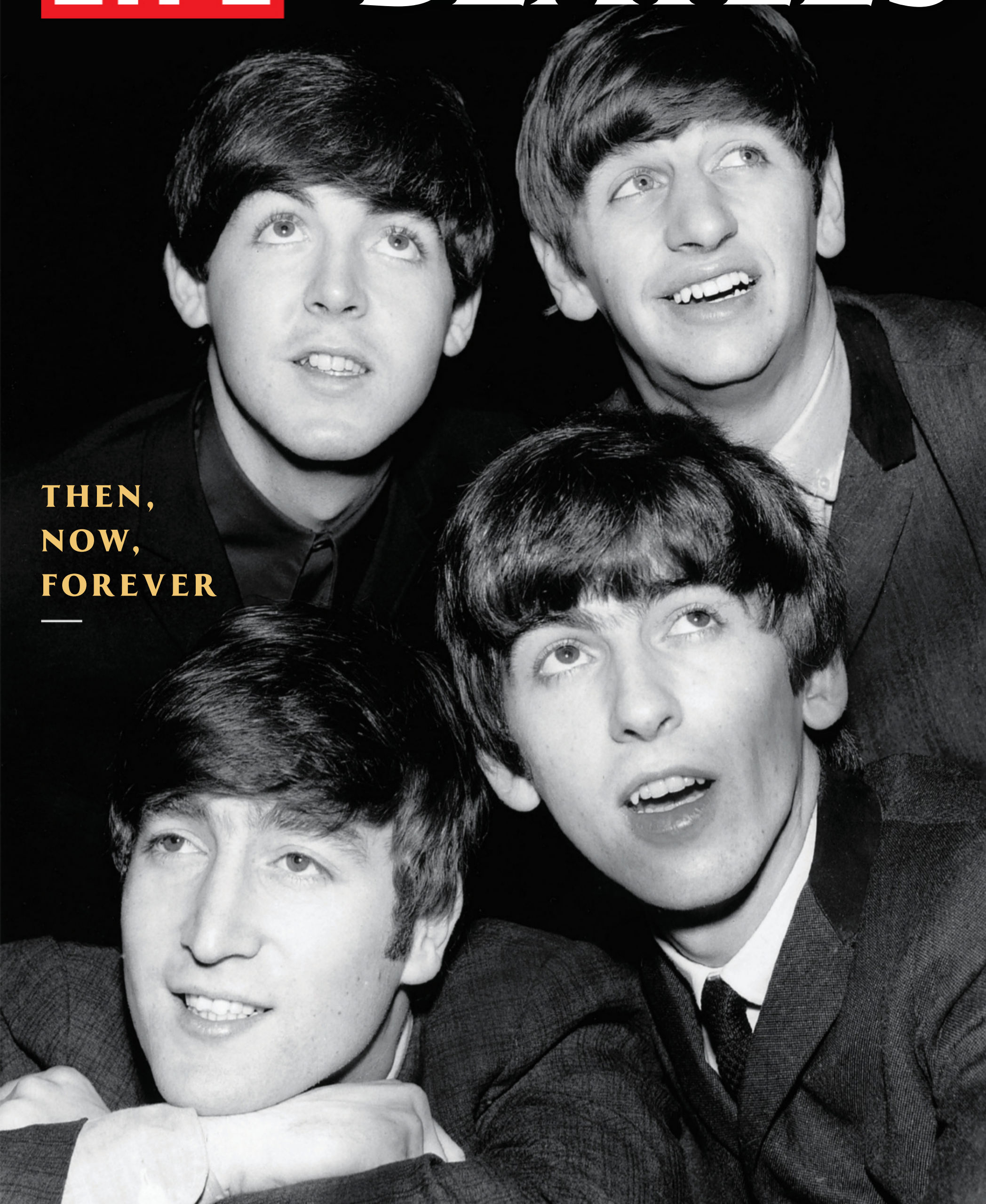
The Beatles, 1965



LIFE

THE BEATLES

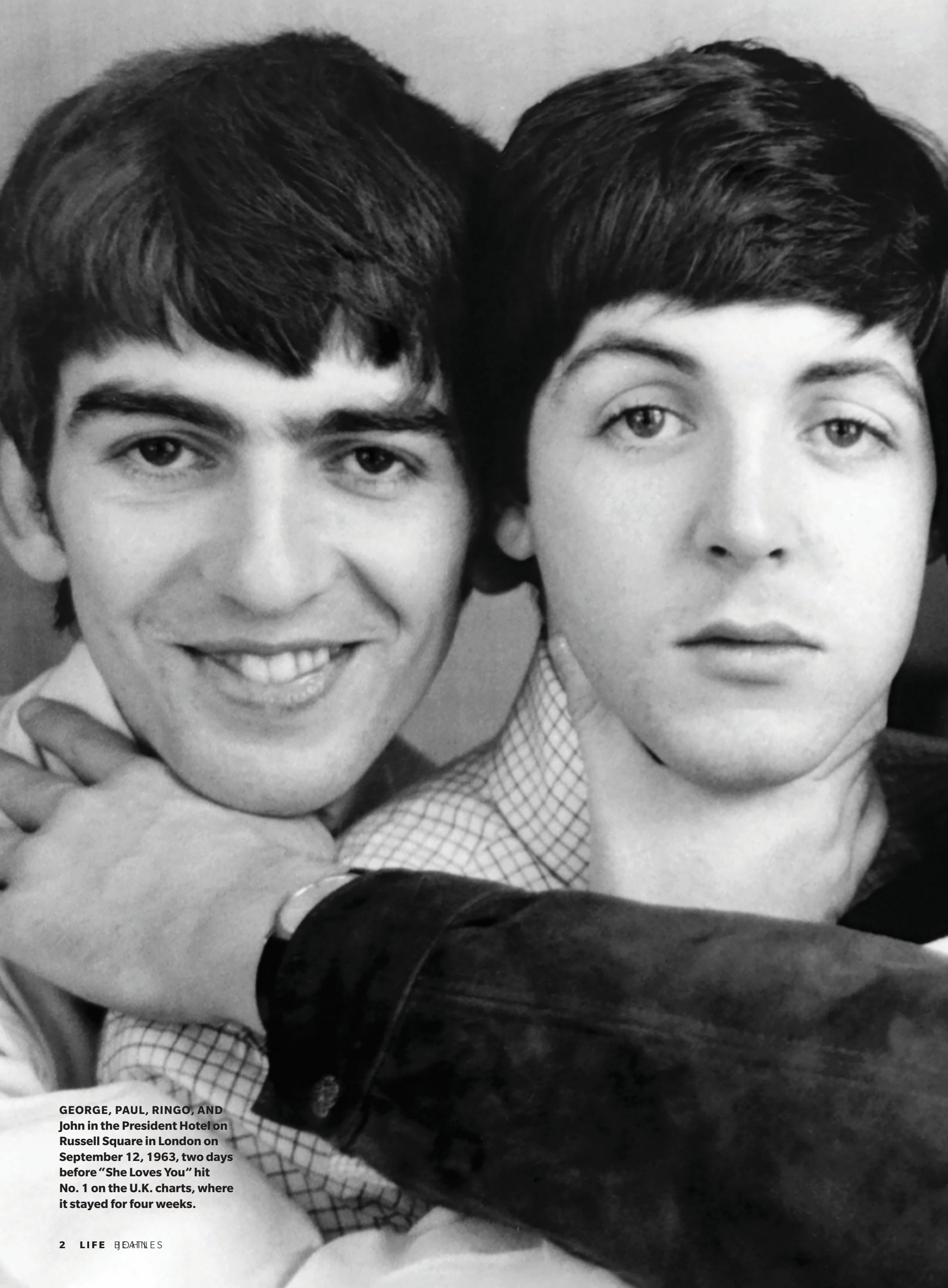


THEN,
NOW,
FOREVER

LIFE

THE BEATLES

Rehearsing for *The Ed Sullivan Show* in New York City, February 1964.



GEORGE, PAUL, RINGO, AND John in the President Hotel on Russell Square in London on September 12, 1963, two days before "She Loves You" hit No. 1 on the U.K. charts, where it stayed for four weeks.

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THEY'RE STILL WITH US

BY STEVE RUSHIN

FROM ALMOST THE MOMENT they broke up, 50 years ago this spring, the Beatles were rumored to be reuniting. In one tumultuous decade they had literally risen from obscurity, ascending from a Liverpool cellar to unprecedented heights of fame, making themselves indispensable to millions. And so, from the very beginning of the end, the world was trying to put the Beatles back together.

"My answer to the question, 'Will the Beatles get together again?' is no," Paul McCartney wrote to the British music journal *Melody Maker* in the summer of 1970, mere months after news of their breakup had become official. The letter was an effort, in McCartney's words, "to put out of its misery the limping dog of a news story which has been dragging itself across your pages."

What a relief, then, that the Beatles never really left us, and have never ceased to be. *Meet the Beatles!* was the second Beatles album released in the United States, but it's also what every generation has managed to do during the last half century: discover anew the music and the mythology of the Beatles. In 2018, McCartney's album *Egypt Station* reached No. 1 on the *Billboard* Hot 200. In 2019, Beatles songs were streamed nearly 2 billion times on Spotify.

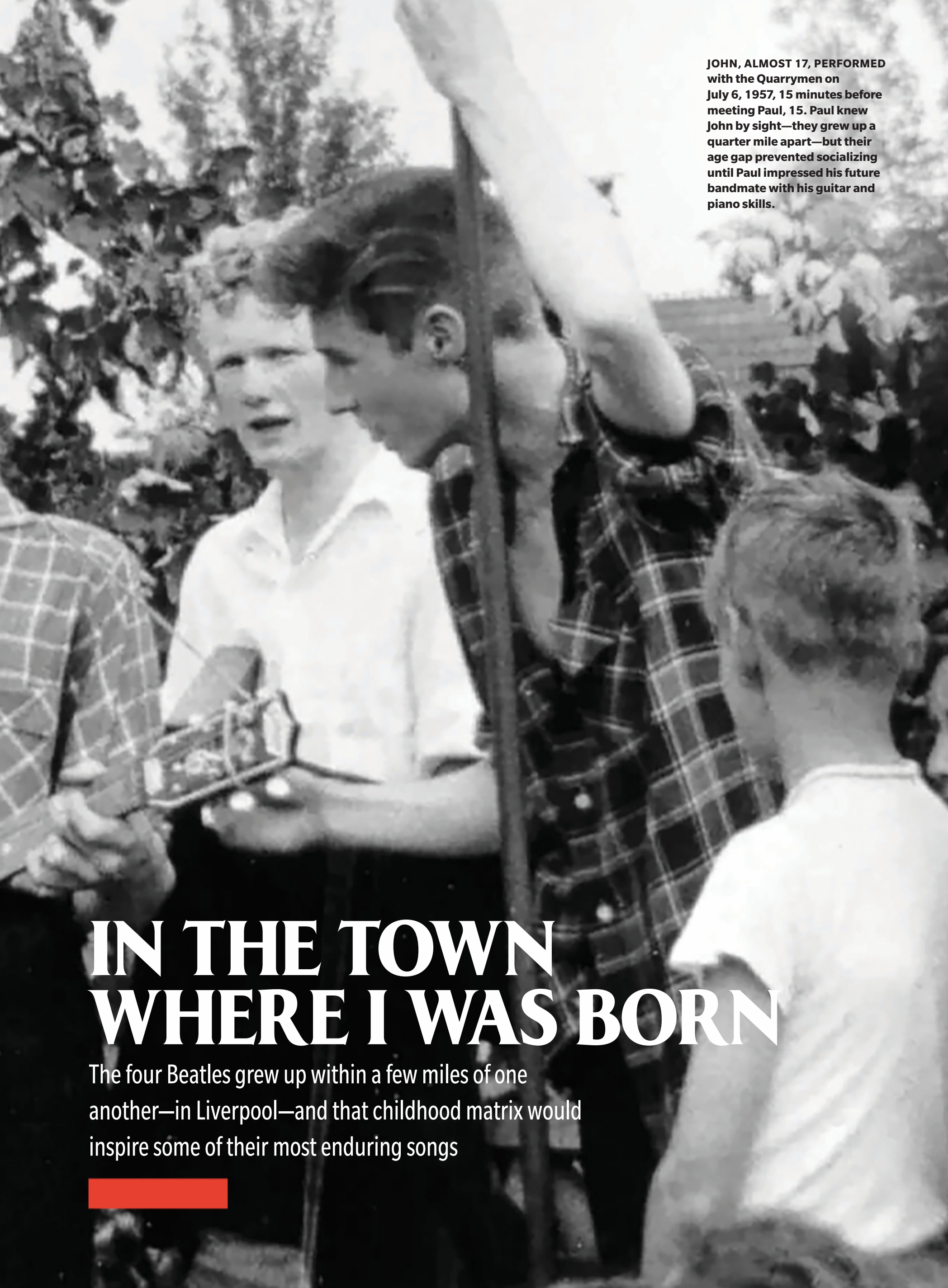
Why? The Beatles were the big bang that created much of modern youth culture—popular music, concerts, fashion, film, merchandising. "For me, and many others, the Beatles came as a welcome breath of fresh air," said Stephen Hawking in 1992, speaking on the BBC when choosing *Please Please Me* as one of his Desert Island Discs. The physicist knew that a collapsing star creates a black hole. And while there were no greater stars than the Beatles, their collapse didn't leave a void from which no light can escape. The Beatles defied physics and remain luminous. John Lennon sang it, five years after the Beatles broke up: "We all shine on, like the moon and the stars and the sun." On and on, on and on. ●

AT THE GEORGE V HOTEL IN Paris, the boys celebrated that "I Want to Hold Your Hand" had hit No. 1 on the *Billboard* Hot 100 in America—their first—on February 1, 1964. John didn't want to participate but then snuck up behind Paul and whacked him in the head with a pillow, initiating 20 minutes of chaos.

PHOTOGRAPH © HARRY BENSON 1964

CHAPTER

1



JOHN, ALMOST 17, PERFORMED with the Quarrymen on July 6, 1957, 15 minutes before meeting Paul, 15. Paul knew John by sight—they grew up a quarter mile apart—but their age gap prevented socializing until Paul impressed his future bandmate with his guitar and piano skills.

IN THE TOWN WHERE I WAS BORN

The four Beatles grew up within a few miles of one another—in Liverpool—and that childhood matrix would inspire some of their most enduring songs

JOHN AT ABOUT AGE 5, WHEN his father disappeared from his life and John went to live with his maternal aunt Mimi. Opposite: John with his mother, Julia, who was struck and killed by a car on July 15, 1958, when John was 17. He named his son Julian after her.

Paul McCartney and John Lennon met in a churchyard, as befits the biblical scale of their lives. Paul had a classmate at the Liverpool Institute High School for Boys named Ivan Vaughan with whom he shared a birthday, June 18, 1942, making them both 15 years old on the midsummer day in 1957 when Vaughan invited McCartney to see a skiffle band, the Quarrymen, at the Woolton Parish Church Garden Fete, in Liverpool.

The lead singer of the Quarrymen, a friend of Ivan's, belted out the wrong lyrics to "Come Go with Me," by a doo-wop group from Pittsburgh called the Del-Vikings, and after the gig, Paul met that older boy, who was nearly 17 and wore a kind of Elvis Presley pompadour. James Paul McCartney was immediately unimpressed with John Winston Lennon. "I was surprised," McCartney would say later, "at how drunk and horrible he was."

Thus began the fruitful, fraught, competitive, and remunerative partnership that would go down in history, and onto record labels, as "Lennon-McCartney," the composer's cocredit that applied to most of the Beatles' hits, whether they were written largely by Lennon or by McCartney—as in the double A-side single "Strawberry Fields Forever" (Lennon) and "Penny Lane" (McCartney) that was rooted in their Liverpool adolescence. McCartney fancied himself and Lennon a new Rodgers & Hammerstein, and he accepted his secondary billing—Lennon-McCartney, rather than McCartney-Lennon—after conceding that "Hammerstein & Rodgers" didn't have the same ring as its reverse.

Paul would join the Quarrymen as a second guitarist and vocalist. Ivan Vaughan would marry a woman named Jan, who would go on to teach French, and give Paul—long after the Quarrymen had become the Beatles—a line for a song: "*Michelle, ma belle, sont les mots qui vont très bien ensemble.*" (McCartney would send her a check for her contribution to the canon.) But this was all in a future unimaginable in that Liverpool churchyard on July 6, 1957, when—unknown to both parties—the greatest writing partnership in the history of popular music was born.

Neither man would ever learn to read or write musical notation, which

belonged to a classical tradition. (They figured if they couldn't remember the melodies, listeners wouldn't either.) McCartney and Lennon shared, from an early age, a love of American rock 'n' roll, from Buddy Holly to Little Richard to Chuck Berry, who in 1956 had announced the arrival of a new era (in a song the Beatles would cover) with the memorable phrase "Roll over Beethoven, and tell Tchaikovsky the news."

Not that Lennon or McCartney were necessarily inspired by their new heroes' lyrics. "We couldn't make out what Elvis was saying, or Chuck Berry," Lennon said. "It was just this noise. But it was great."

Their own voices blended in beautiful harmonies, one rough, one smooth, but Lennon and McCartney were bonded by tragedy, as well. McCartney lost his mother, Mary, when he was 14—about eight months before he met John—to an embolism following breast cancer surgery. Lennon would lose his mother, Julia, a year after he met Paul, when she was struck by a car while crossing the street outside the house—at 251 Menlove Avenue—where John lived with Julia's sister, his aunt Mimi. He had moved into Mimi's house after Julia separated from Lennon's itinerant father, Alf. It was Mimi who said, "The guitar's all right for a hobby, John, but you'll never make a living at it."

In this childhood, in this city, are the seeds of the music. "Mother, you had me but I never had you," John would sing many years later. "Father, you left me but I never left you." And Paul would sing about his own mother returning to soothe him in a dream: "Mother Mary comes to me, speaking words of wisdom, Let it be."

"All art," John said, "is pain expressing itself." But maybe that isn't true for everyone.

PAUL AND HIS YOUNGER brother, Michael, on a family trip to Wales in 1948, above. Opposite: Paul; his father, James; and Michael in their backyard around 1960. Paul was close to his father, who played at family gatherings on a piano bought from the music store owned by Brian Epstein's family.

"I don't pretend to have had as painful a childhood as John," McCartney told the New York *Daily News* in 1991, as he was preparing to debut his Liverpool Oratorio. "And as an artist, it would be the worst thing to wish I had. You can't write from someone else's experience. Compared to John, I had a serene childhood. My memories are very pleasant. I'm sure that's one reason I became the warm side of Lennon-McCartney."

Another student at Liverpool Institute—George Harrison, about eight months younger than McCartney—rode the same bus to school as McCartney. One day in February 1958, he was invited by Paul and John to audition for the Quarrymen by playing "Raunchy," by the Memphis guitarist Bill Justis, while the three of them sat

"Compared to John, I had

A SERENE CHILDHOOD.

My memories are very pleasant. I'm sure that's one reason I became the warm side of Lennon-McCartney."

on the upper level of a double-decker bus heading into the great unknown. Roll up for the mystery tour.

Louise Harrison had bought a used guitar for the youngest of her four children before he knew how to play it, much less make it gently weep. At 14, he was good enough to impress Lennon and McCartney.

A fourth Liverpool kid, Richie Starkey, had been beset by various illnesses most of his young life. Like the others, he used World War II bomb sites—"bombies"—as a playground while growing up. His parents split up when he was three, and Richie spent a year in the hospital at age six after suffering a burst appendix. Hospitalized again with tuberculosis at 13, he played a small drum as part of his therapy, with a group of other patients, and decided that he didn't want to part with the instrument.

Starkey was older than the others, having turned 17 the day after Paul met John. Like Lennon—and thousands of other people in the U.K. at the time—Starkey, who wore rings on the fingers of both hands and thus played under the stage name Ringo Starr, was in a newly formed skiffle band, which he would eventually abandon before finding success, at home and in Hamburg, Germany, with another band called Rory Storm and the Hurricanes.

A bassist named Stuart Sutcliffe and a drummer named Pete Best would each have early stints in the Beatles, both men achieving an early poignant fame. But the lads who would become

GEORGE PLAYED GUITAR AT 11 (opposite, circa 1954) and posed with his father, Harold, above, while in Liverpool for a concert on December 7, 1963. With George a year behind Paul, their interactions were confined to the bus, where they shared their admiration for the guitar-playing Elvis, especially his "Heartbreak Hotel."

THE ONLY CHILD OF PARENTS who split up when he was three, Ringo (above, in 1948) was the oldest Beatle and the last to join the group. Without siblings, he viewed his bandmates as brothers. He was not a strong student, partly because he missed school due to long illnesses. John told the pompadoured Ringo (opposite, circa 1959) when he joined the Beatles that he had to tame the tall hair, but the sideburns could stay.

known as the Fab Four—whose names will forever be recited in this order: John, Paul, George, and Ringo—grew up within a few miles of one another and, by chance or grace or fate, met and connected and grew to become something much bigger than the sum of the parts.

"What are the odds," McCartney would say in 2007, reflecting back, as if speaking about someone else, "that those four guys would find each other?"

As a 16-year-old, Paul had already written "When I'm Sixty-four" on the family piano, in his boyhood home at 20 Forthlin Road, imagining a day many decades hence when he'd be bouncing grandchildren on his knee: Vera, Chuck, and Dave. (Now, incidentally, he has eight grandchildren, at least one of whom calls him Grandude.) In the same room, Paul sang "She Loves You," and his father, James—a cotton salesman who for a time played trumpet in Jim Mac's Jazz Band—suggested (between puffs of his pipe) that Paul replace the dreaded Americanism "yeah, yeah, yeah" with the more proper English of "yes, yes, yes." The young Beatles declined.

What *are* the odds, as Paul noted, that any of this would happen? These four young men would play the Cavern Club in Liverpool, wear black leather jackets in Hamburg on their mop-topped rise to colossal fame, infect the world with Beatlemania, appear besuited on *The Ed Sullivan Show,* bob their heads to the shrieking teens at Shea Stadium, retreat to the studio on Abbey Road, don the militant bellhop costumes of their Sgt. Pepper jackets, add each year to the litany of timeless hits, grow musically and spiritually, dabble in drugs, Eastern mysticism, and psychedelia, perform their wind-blown rooftop concert cut short by police, fall out with one another, then ride out their dispiriting breakup in 1970—"all those years ago," as George later put it, though even now not so terribly long ago, considering that the music has never faded.

While they were together as a band, the Beatles walked in perfect lockstep with the 1960s, or perhaps the '60s walked in lockstep with them. Either way, it was a lockstep the Beatles couldn't quite manage with one another in one of the century's most imitated photographs, in that Abbey Road zebra crossing, outside the EMI Recording Studios in St. John's Wood, London, on August 8, 1969.

In the background of that photo, which was shot by Iain MacMillan and became the cover for the 1969 album *Abbey Road,* a 58-year-old American tourist named Paul Cole looks on quizzically, not least because one of these

A.A.
OFFICE

four "kooks," as he would describe the men he did not otherwise recognize, was barefoot. That shoeless strut (along with the cigarette held in the right hand of a left-handed man, and other "clues") helped fuel rumors that this particular Beatle—Paul—was dead. "I wasn't," McCartney has often noted. But by 1969, the Beatles very nearly were, though it wouldn't become official until April 10, 1970.

That was a little more than a dozen years after Paul and John met at the church garden fete, but it was also at least 210 Beatles songs later—along with 13 studio albums, 20 No. 1 hits in the United States, five films, an Oscar (for *Let It Be*), and a smothering and unprecedented global fame that sometimes turned frightening, all of it driven by a fan base so vast that it included fellow artists as diverse as Frank Sinatra (who recorded McCartney's "Yesterday" and Harrison's "Something," which he called the greatest love song of the previous half century) and Ozzy Osbourne (who said that hearing "She Loves You" was what made him want to become a musician).

As the '50s turned into the '60s, the Beatles, at the center of the pop culture firmament, would supplant one of their heroes, Elvis Presley, whom they met on August 27, 1965, in his Bel Air, California, redoubt while the King was churning out disposable movies for Colonel Tom Parker. (They were impressed by his pool table, which converted into a craps table, and by his television remote control, a miraculous gizmo at the time.) Elvis had already experienced global hysteria, and preceded the Beatles on *Ed Sullivan,* but the Beatles had an advantage in surviving the perils of fame that eventually consumed Elvis. Only Elvis knew what it was like to be Elvis, but there were four Beatles, sharing hotel rooms, commiserating, and goofing off. Each Beatle had three friends who knew what it was like to be a Beatle.

That this dizzying ride began in the staid 1950s, in a rainy and repressed Great Britain, makes the Beatles' story all the more remarkable. They come from a sodden island and would sing disproportionately about the sunshine they so seldom saw. "I'll Follow the Sun," "Good Day Sunshine," "Here Comes the Sun," "Sun King"—until even the other songs were often about it, or the promise of it: "So we sailed on to the sun . . ." ("Yellow Submarine"), "Look for the girl with the sun in her eyes and she's gone . . ." ("Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds"), "Sitting in an English garden waiting for the sun . . ." ("I Am the Walrus").

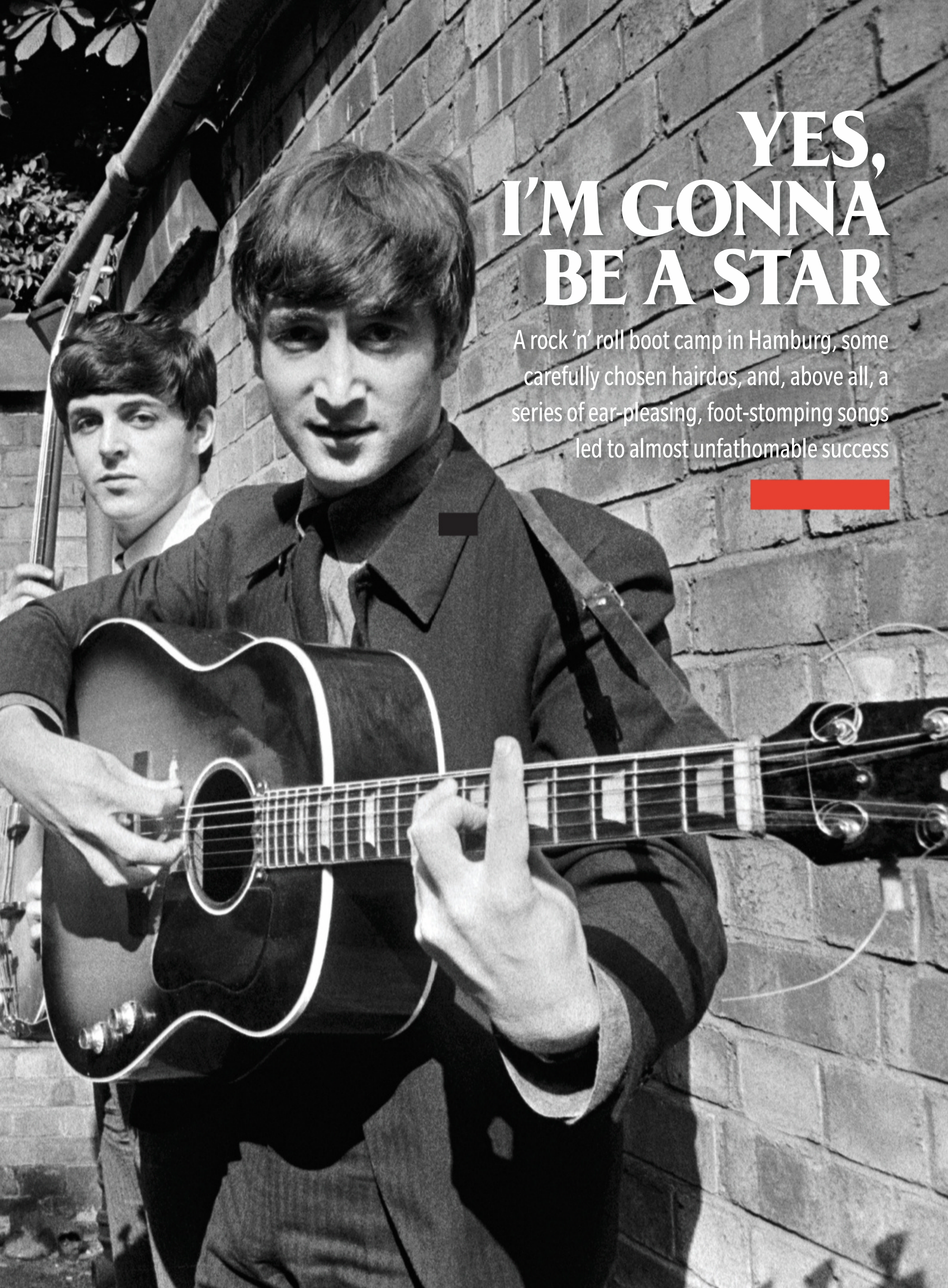
They warmed the planet. George Harrison probably never said what he is widely quoted as having said, but the sentiment rings true nonetheless: "The Beatles saved the world from boredom." ●

GEORGE, JOHN, AND PAUL outside the McCartney home on Forthlin Road around 1960, above. Opposite: John, George, and Ringo in Liverpool on February 1, 1963, a year before America would meet the Beatles on *The Ed Sullivan Show.*

CHAPTER

2

THE BEATLES IN 1963, THE year their first two albums, *Please Please Me* and *With the Beatles*, were released.



YES, I'M GONNA BE A STAR

A rock 'n' roll boot camp in Hamburg, some carefully chosen hairdos, and, above all, a series of ear-pleasing, foot-stomping songs led to almost unfathomable success

The Quarrymen briefly became Johnny & the Moondogs, the Silver Beetles, and finally, by the summer of 1960, the Beatles, in homage to Buddy Holly and the Crickets. (John loved Holly in part because he also wore glasses.) Their first manager, a businessman named Allan Williams, booked them to play in Hamburg and drove them to Germany himself in a van—along the way taking a ferry from Harwich in England to the Netherlands. John, Paul, George, drummer Pete Best, and bassist Stuart Sutcliffe performed in nightclubs on the notorious Reeperbahn.

It was Sutcliffe's girlfriend, and later fiancée, a German photographer and fashionista named Astrid Kirchherr, who cut Sutcliffe's hair in a mop top, a style then in vogue in Germany and emulated by the rest of the band. In Hamburg, playing for hours on end every night—48 nights in a row at one point—fueled by youth and amphetamines, in one of Europe's most notorious red-light districts, they were helping to invent, or at least perfect, a lifestyle that hadn't yet become a cliché: sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll.

This was rock 'n' roll boot camp—"It was Hamburg that did it," John said—and they returned to Liverpool with musical chops and a growing international fan base to play their favored local venue, the Cavern Club, where, during a lunch-hour gig on November 9, 1961, Brian Epstein first saw them. The 27-year-old Epstein ran his family's music store, a block from the Cavern Club, called NEMS, short for North End Music Stores, the shop where James McCartney had bought the family's

GEORGE, PAUL, ORIGINAL drummer Pete Best, and John sported early rocker leather at Liverpool's Cavern Club, where future manager Brian Epstein would first hear them play during a lunchtime concert on November 9, 1961.

piano, Paul had bought his first records, and, more recently, at least two customers had come in asking if there were a Beatles record for sale. Epstein signed the band to a management contract. They were available only because they'd booked a Hamburg gig on their own, without giving a commission to Allan Williams, who let them go to Epstein, famously warning him: "They'll let you down." Epstein persuaded the Beatles to wear suits, stop eating on stage, and perform with a more professional polish, to please the middle-aged club and theater owners. Sutcliffe had left the Beatles in the spring of 1961 to stay in Hamburg with Kirchherr. He died a year later at 21 of a brain hemorrhage.

Epstein pitched the Beatles to Decca Records but was rejected. He then took the band to audition for a producer at EMI's studios, on Abbey Road in London. It was 1962. The Beatles performed "Love Me Do," "P.S. I Love You," and "Ask My Why." The producer, George Martin, was not impressed by the Beatles' original songs, and told them so, but he also asked the boys, with a sense of equity, if there was anything *they* didn't like. "For starters," said George, "I don't like your tie." Martin, 36 years old, was charmed by their wit and personalities, and couldn't help but think that audiences would be as well.

The band signed on with EMI's Parlophone label, for which Martin produced classical music, novelty records, and comedy albums by British icons Spike Mulligan and Peter Sellers. Martin had also had a surprise No. 1 pop hit of sorts called "You're Driving Me Crazy" by an eclectic band named the Temperance Seven, which played, of all things, Roaring '20s–style jazz.

Even with his mostly genteel recording history, Martin thought that the Beatles' performance of "Please Please Me" was too slow.

"Can we change the tempo?" he asked Paul.

"What's that?" Paul replied.

"Make it a bit faster," said Martin, who also didn't think Pete Best's drumming was good enough to use on the record. It fell to Epstein to fire Best in favor of Starr.

PIANIST ROY YOUNG performed with the band at the Star-Club in Hamburg, Germany, in May 1962 (above), shortly before the Beatles signed a contract with EMI and Ringo replaced Pete Best. Opposite: The Beatles photographed that same year in Hamburg by Astrid Kirchherr, who created the band's trademark mop tops.

THE BEATLES CLOWNING around on November 4, 1963, at a rehearsal for that night's Royal Variety Performance in London, which attracted the notice of the British press and earned them their first mainstream American coverage.

The Beatles' first single, "Love Me Do" (with "P.S. I Love You" on the flip side) was released in the U.K. on October 5, 1962. It was two minutes and 22 seconds of harmonica-driven pop addressed, in the first person, to teenage girls. The band offered the same message—in the same first-person voice—on the reverse. "Love me" the A-side told its audience, and the B-side added the postscript: "I love you." George Martin, bewitched by symphony orchestras as a child, now began to fall under the spell of rock 'n' roll.

As U.S. marshals were protecting James Meredith, the first black student to enroll at the University of Mississippi, from racial violence, and the United States and Soviet Union were bringing the world to the precipice of war during the Cuban Missile Crisis that month, the Beatles were singing: "Love, love me do / you know I love you / I'll always be true…" It went to No. 17 on the U.K. singles chart. The band's first studio album, *Please Please Me,* came out the following spring, recorded during a single 12-hour marathon at Abbey Road. There followed a building torrent of original songs, almost all of them about love, sung directly to those teenage girls, including "From Me to You," "She Loves You," and, in November 1963, the dam breaker: "I Want to Hold Your Hand."

They were honoring long-standing commitments to play small venues, but drawing enormous crowds outside shows, including at London Airport, where they arrived from a gig in Scandinavia to screaming fans. A visiting American who witnessed that scene at the airport asked who everyone was waiting for and then promptly inquired about booking the Beatles; about three months later, they would appear on his network variety program, *The Ed Sullivan Show.*

"We don't want to go to America until we have a No. 1 record," McCartney told Epstein. Beatlemania had its name by then: The term made its first known appearance in the *Daily Mail* in October 1963, and was an echo of the

Lisztomania that had gripped swooning fans of the Hungarian pianist and composer Franz Liszt in the 19th century. The Beatles were performing in Paris in January 1964 when they received a telegram informing them that "I Want to Hold Your Hand" had just topped the charts in the United States. They celebrated, these four young men ages 20 to 23, with a pillow fight in the opulent George V hotel, a benign model of the room-trashing tradition that future rock stars would follow.

The Beatles arrived in America on a Friday, February 7, 1964, aboard Pan Am 101, at John F. Kennedy International Airport, recently renamed for the president who was assassinated barely two months earlier. A crowd of about 3,000—mostly hooky-playing teenage girls in the grip of early-onset Beatlemania—greeted them. The Fab Four—a phrase coined by a press officer named Tony Barrow, who first used it in a press release—made brief remarks in a chaotic press conference that neither side took seriously.

Reporter: "How was your flight?"

George: "A bit bumpy over Alaska."

Reporter: "How many of you are bald if you have to wear those wigs?"

John: "Oh, we're all bald, yeah."

And then these four cheeky young men, to the shrieks that were now a permanent soundtrack for their public lives, were chauffeured in individual limousines to the presidential suite of the Plaza Hotel. "We knew that America would make us or break us as world stars," Epstein would say later. They had gotten their answer on touchdown.

Two days later, in front of a live audience that included John's wife, Cynthia, who had flown with the Beatles to New York, the band performed before 73 million Americans on *The Ed Sullivan Show.* Thirty-eight percent of the population, the largest audience in television history at the time, saw the Beatles play five songs over two segments, building to the No. 1 single, then in CONTINUED ON PAGE 30

IN THE STUDIO AT ABBEY ROAD (above) in January 1963, with music publisher Dick James (far left) and producer George Martin, the Beatles recorded their first No. 1 hit, "Please Please Me." Opposite: In September of that year, they worked with Martin on their second album, *With the Beatles*.

PHOTOGRAPHS © HARRY BENSON 1964 (3)

THE BEATLES AT THE OLYMPIA in Paris in January 1964, taking their low, simultaneous bows, a signature move created by Brian Epstein. Opposite, from top: John, Brian, and Ringo relaxed; the band read fan mail at the Hotel George V.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 27 endless rotation in the United States, "I Want to Hold Your Hand." Also in the live audience was a mother of two living in Benton, Illinois—via Liverpool, Canada, and South America. Her name was Louise Caldwell. She was George Harrison's sister, though skeptical security guards didn't buy this claim and initially turned her away when she came to the Plaza Hotel.

As the CBS cameras captured the girls in the theater weeping, screaming, chewing gum, and bouncing in their seats, grown-ups at home were looking on in bafflement or anger.

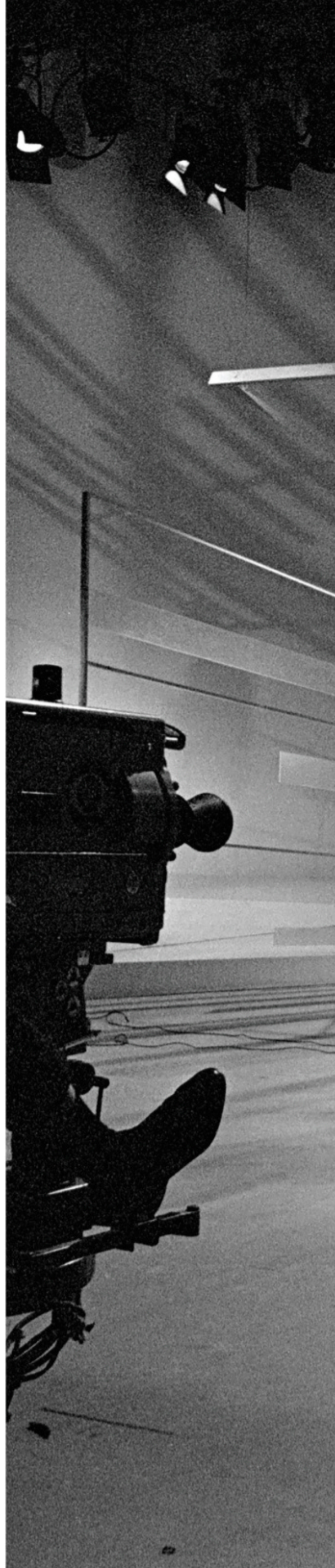
"We knew that America would MAKE US OR BREAK US as world stars," Epstein would say later. They had gotten their answer on touchdown.

The graphic identifying Lennon in close-ups carried the sub-caption "Sorry Girls, He's Married." In fact, he and Cynthia had a baby as well, named Julian.

Crucial to the rock 'n' roll mythology that the Beatles were building was the fact that many parents hated everything about the Beatles, and, unlike the 62-year-old Sullivan, the gatekeepers of other American media were seized by bouts of get-off-my-lawn apoplexy. "The Beatles, with their tight-fitting pants and disgusting hairdos, leave much to be desired," went a typical editorial, in an Ohio newspaper, on the morning after the *Sullivan* show, adding: "We'll express no sorrow when the Beatles go back home—or someplace else, just so they leave us alone."

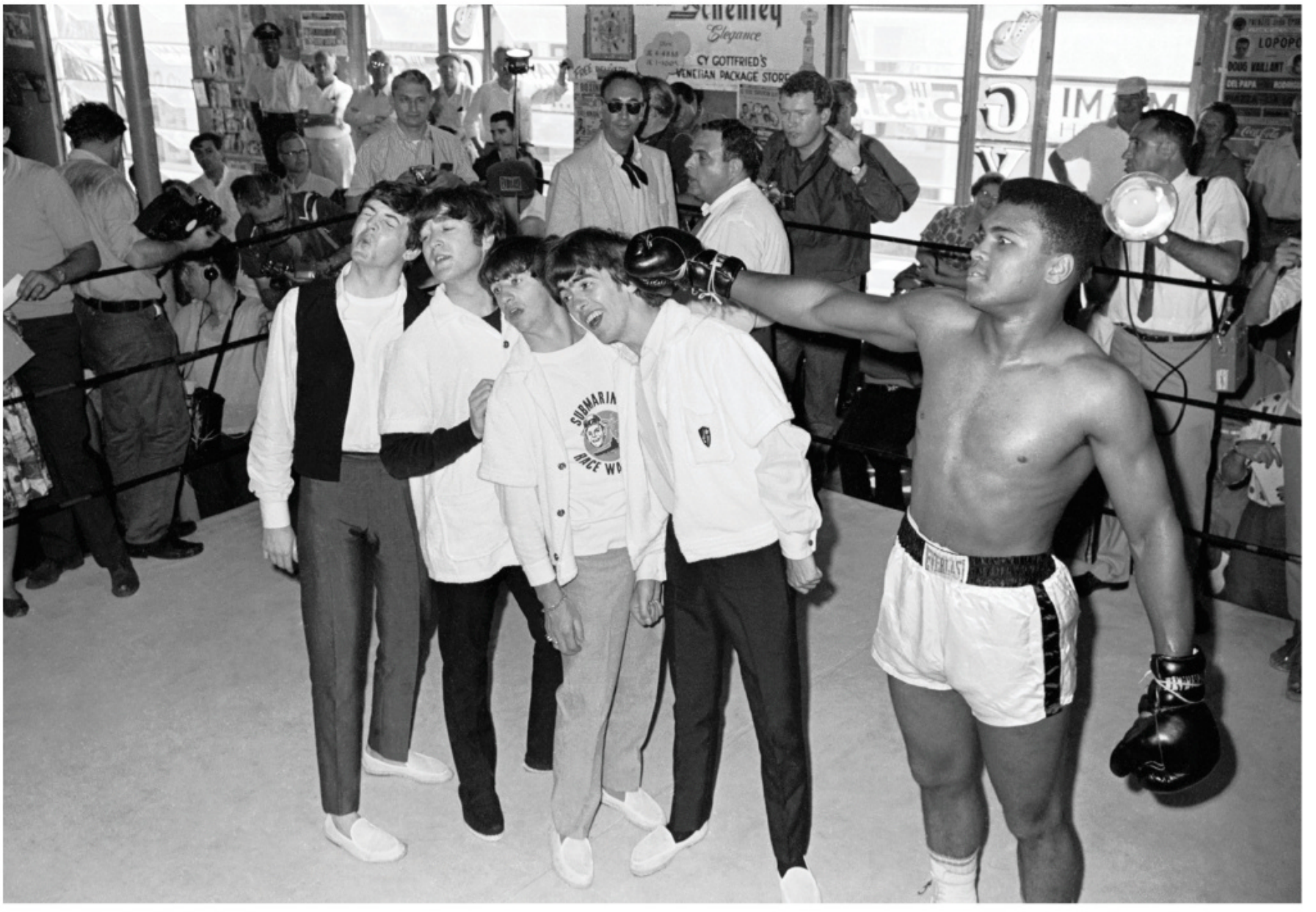
But of course, wherever the Beatles were going—and nobody knew; even McCartney conceded CONTINUED ON PAGE 34

THE BEATLES ARRIVED AT John F. Kennedy Airport in New York City on February 7, 1964, on their first U.S. trip.



ED SULLIVAN GOT A GUITAR lesson during rehearsal (top). The daughters of CBS anchorman Walter Cronkite, Nancy (left) and Kathy (right), met Paul and Ringo (above). Right: The Beatles took the Sullivan stage in front of a screaming audience just after 8 p.m. on February 9, 1964.

4



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 30 he didn't think they'd last—it was into uncharted precincts of celebrity, and perhaps even into an unprecedented place of artistic expression.

Bob Dylan set off on a cross-country drive, a great American road trip, in February of 1964. "We were driving through Colorado, we had the radio on and eight of the top 10 songs were Beatles songs," he would tell the writer Anthony Scaduto in 1971. "'I Wanna Hold Your Hand,' all those early ones. They were doing things nobody was doing. Their chords were outrageous, and their harmonies made it all valid… Everybody else thought they were for the teenyboppers, that they were gonna pass right away. But it was obvious to me that they had staying power. I knew they were pointing the direction of where music had to go."

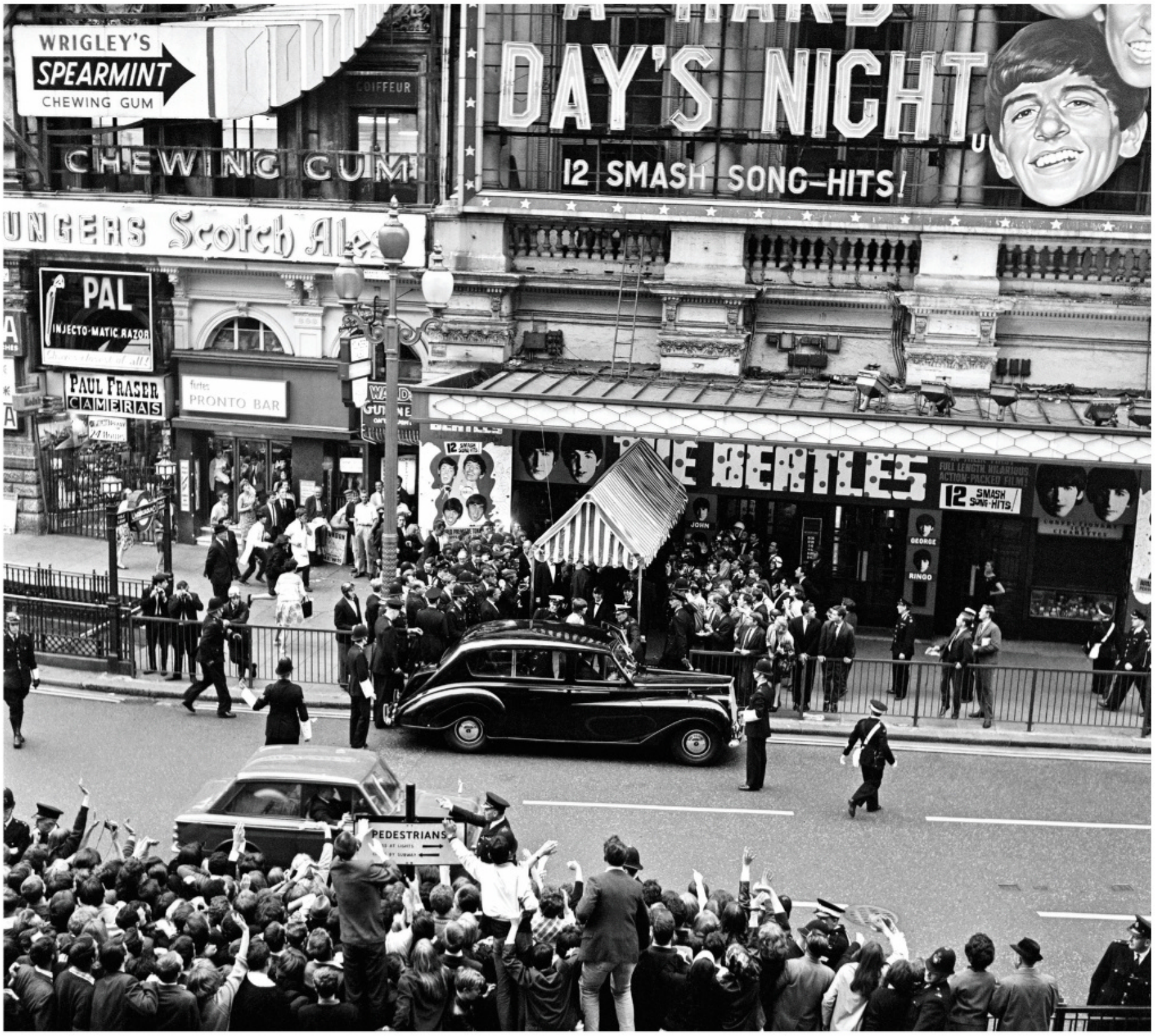
The Beatles were, from that moment forward, a commercial and creative collective unlike any before or since. Nine days after the *Sullivan* show, they were clowning with a 22-year-old boxer named Cassius Clay at the Fifth Street Gym in Miami Beach (where the Beatles would appear by popular demand on another *Ed Sullivan Show*) while the heavyweight boxing contender was training for a title fight against Sonny Liston. Like the Beatles, Clay knew how to attract publicity. He composed his own verse and recited, for the assembled press, this bit of doggerel:

When Sonny Liston picks up the
papers and sees
That the Beatles came to see me
He will get angry and I will knock
him out in three.

A week later Clay did indeed defeat Liston—it took six rounds—and became the heavyweight champion of the world, after which he changed his name to Muhammad Ali and joined the four Beatles on the short list of the most famous and influential people of the second half of the 20th century, stars of such magnitude that their craft was often secondary to their mere presence.

"When I first went to see the Beatles . . . it was to look at them,"

THE BEATLES WENT TO MIAMI for another live appearance on Ed Sullivan's show and met Cassius Clay—before he took the name Muhammad Ali—on February 18, 1964, while he trained for a match with Sonny Liston. Although initially reluctant to do another photo op during their American visit, the band immediately liked the boxer. Opposite: Brian Epstein always sought publicity for the band, even when the Beatles swam in Miami.



THE BEATLES ATTENDED THE world premiere of their first movie, *A Hard Day's Night,* at the London Pavilion on July 6, 1964, above. Four days later, the band attended the Liverpool premiere, where they were greeted at the airport by 3,000 fans and driven to city hall along a route lined with an estimated 200,000 people. Opposite: Art imitates life in a scene from the film.

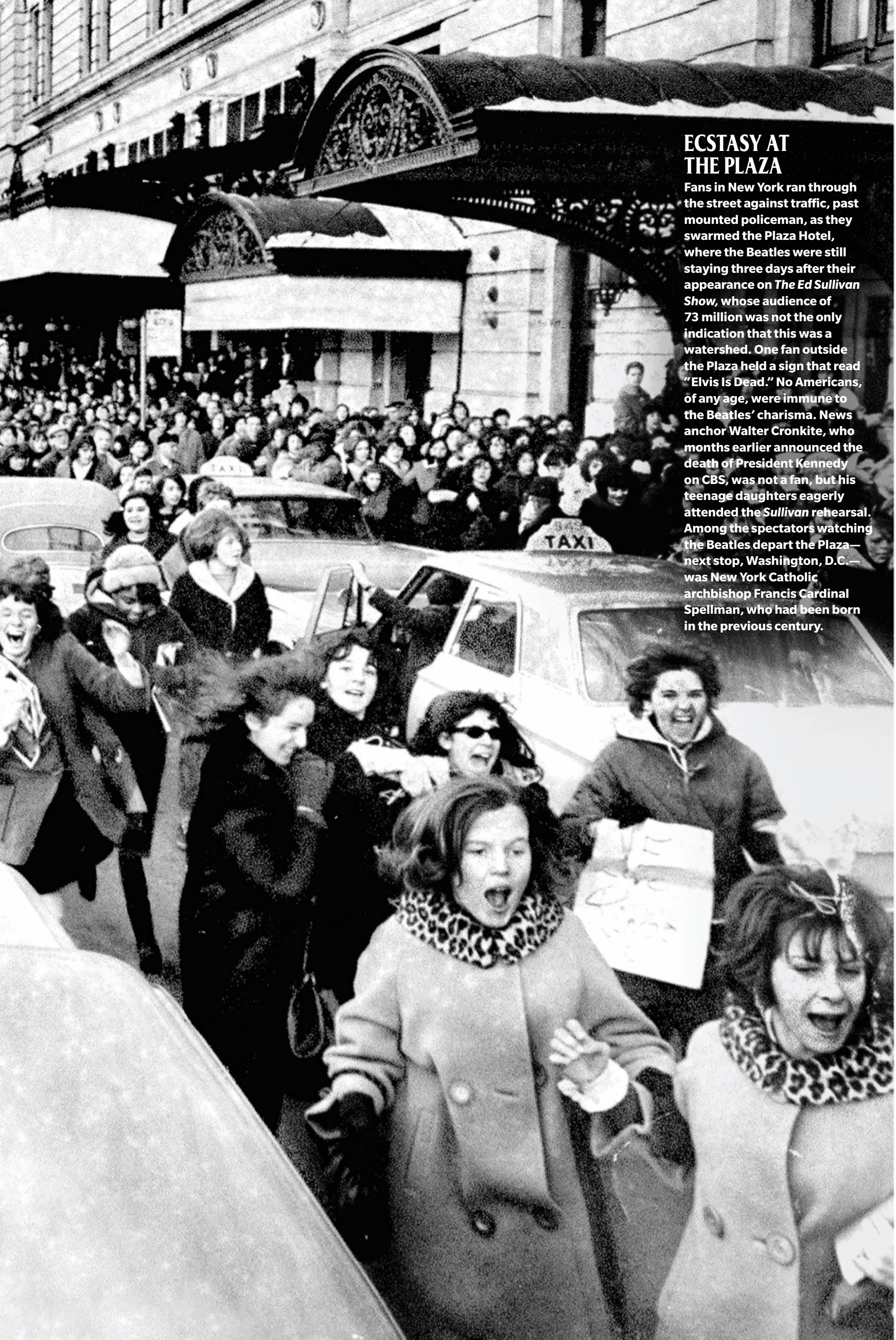
said John Bonham, whose band, Led Zeppelin, would take the mantle in the 1970s as the biggest rock stars in the world. "You didn't really bother [with] what you were listening to."

And so people around the world came in great numbers merely to gaze upon the Beatles. By June, as many as 300,000 spectators watched their motorcade from the airport into the city center in Adelaide, Australia. Police in Sydney were making a preemptive appeal to fans awaiting the Beatles arrival there "to cooperate with us for [your] own protection." Ten thousand fans had welcomed them at their Melbourne hotel, and 150 people fainted in the frenzy. Their American fan club alone had 50,000 fans paying $2 apiece for photographs with facsimile signatures, a phenomenon replicated around the world, for the band had already toured Europe, the United States, and Hong Kong before the Australia and New Zealand stops. At the same time, the Beatles' first feature film, *A Hard Day's Night,* opened to critical and box office success. A madcap Marx Brothers-ish romp that displayed the Beatles' charm to full effect, the movie's title was taken from a Ringo malapropism.

"The Beatles were so big that it's hard for people not alive at the time to realize just how big they were," Mick Jagger would say years later of that time when he was aspiring to break into America as well. "There isn't a real comparison with anyone." ●

Beatlemania

A Phenomenon in Pictures



ECSTASY AT THE PLAZA

Fans in New York ran through the street against traffic, past mounted policeman, as they swarmed the Plaza Hotel, where the Beatles were still staying three days after their appearance on *The Ed Sullivan Show,* whose audience of 73 million was not the only indication that this was a watershed. One fan outside the Plaza held a sign that read "Elvis Is Dead." No Americans, of any age, were immune to the Beatles' charisma. News anchor Walter Cronkite, who months earlier announced the death of President Kennedy on CBS, was not a fan, but his teenage daughters eagerly attended the *Sullivan* rehearsal. Among the spectators watching the Beatles depart the Plaza—next stop, Washington, D.C.—was New York Catholic archbishop Francis Cardinal Spellman, who had been born in the previous century.

PYK 426

ANARCHY IN THE U.K.

The Beatles returned to their hometown as world conquerors in July 1964 to attend the Liverpool premiere of *A Hard Day's Night* and were greeted by excited fans (below, police carried an injured girl to safety). Nine months earlier, right, fans descended upon a TV studio in Birmingham, where the band was recording a performance for the show *Thank Your Lucky Stars*. The Beatles were lucky stars themselves but were also already growing weary of the screaming throngs. Left: A policeman helped George make his way into a theater in Scarborough for a concert in August 1964, by which time the band had become used to secret entrances, side doors, and escape routes.

WELCOME TO OZ

A sea of humanity threatened to swallow the Beatles whole as they made their way to a reception at Town Hall in Adelaide, Australia, in June 1964. The mob then mobilized at the South Australian Hotel, where the band was holed up, prisoners of their own gargantuan fame. Girls at a suburban grammar school outside Adelaide staged a sit-down strike when their teachers took away their Beatles-tuned transistor radios. At the same time, another English band was abroad, seeking its fortune in the United States. "Oh, No, Not More!" one California paper lamented of these "mop-topped British youngsters who profess to sing for a living. This quintet, called 'the Rolling Stones,' out-Beatles the Beatles in at least one category—its tangled collection of coiffures." The British Invasion was in high gear.

FOR THE BENEFIT OF MR. MET

When the Beatles played the Cow Palace outside San Francisco on August 31, 1965, fans not only threw jelly beans and stuffed animals at the band, they also rushed the stage, touched their idols, fainted in hysteria, and, in at least one instance, swan-dived back into the crowd. Fans were—literally and figuratively—carried away (above). Sixteen days earlier, the Fab Four had kicked off their North American tour—and a new phenomenon, which would come to be known as stadium rock—by playing Shea Stadium in New York City (left and opposite), where concert security was also in its infancy. The foul-ball netting, usually employed to protect fans of (and from) the New York Mets, now held screaming Beatlemaniacs at bay.

I'LL BE WRITING MORE IN A WEEK OR TWO

The Beatles' extraordinary work ethic produced increasingly original and experimental songs—as well as hit after hit. Meanwhile, audience fanaticism soured the band on touring

GEORGE, PAUL, AND JOHN rehearsed in November 1965 at London's Donmar Rehearsal Theatre for an upcoming tour. Perched on John's Vox Continental organ is B.B. King's *Live at the Regal* album. Both John and Paul were influenced by American blues.

CHAPTER

3

THE BEATLES OUTSIDE Buckingham Palace on October 26, 1965, after receiving their Member of the Order of the British Empire medals. Opposite: The band attracted attention while filming *Help!* in Austria in March 1965.

The Beatles wrote and recorded more good music, more frequently, in less time, than any artists before or since. When they weren't on the road, they were preparing albums, two a year, plus singles, which required the Beatles to keep office hours, reporting to EMI's studios at 10 a.m., when George Martin and the technicians (whom the band thought of as the "adults" in the room) expected them to arrive. During certain periods of torrid fertility they would, after spending half an hour tuning their instruments, record two songs in the morning, break at 1:30 for lunch, then return at 2:30 to record two more songs in the afternoon, leaving the office—Abbey Road—at 5:30 p.m. In this way, reporting for shift work in a rock 'n' roll music factory, they were able to record 13 studio albums, 22 singles, and 210 songs in eight blindingly bright years, from 1962 to 1970.

It's a measure of McCartney's creative wellspring at the time, the tidal wave of inspiration then washing over him, that he gave an unfinished song to the brother of his then girlfriend, Jane Asher. Peter Asher, with his singing partner Gordon Waller, released "A World Without Love" that same February of the Beatles' *Ed Sullivan* debut. That the song would eventually go to No. 1 in both the U.K. and the United States now seems practically inevitable. By April 4, 1964, less than eight weeks after the first *Sullivan* show, the Beatles themselves had the top five songs on the *Billboard* pop chart, a ridiculous record never achieved before or since. In reverse order, they were: "Please Please Me," "I Want to Hold Your Hand," "She Loves You," "Twist and Shout," and—at No. 1—"Can't Buy Me Love." Regardless of that song's central assertion ("I don't care too much for money") the money was rolling in. By now, as Lennon

ALPEN
SPORT U.
W.L. GEFA
DER SKI- DER DIE WELT BEGEISTERT
KNEISSL
Piz Buin
GEFALL
SPORT

SET LIST

08.15.65

SHEA STADIUM

QUEENS, NEW YORK

Planes overhead from nearby LaGuardia Airport were drowned out by the cacophony of frenzied fans.

1
TWIST AND SHOUT

2
SHE'S A WOMAN

3
I FEEL FINE

4
DIZZY MISS LIZZY

5
TICKET TO RIDE

6
EVERYBODY'S TRYIN' TO BE MY BABY

7
CAN'T BUY ME LOVE

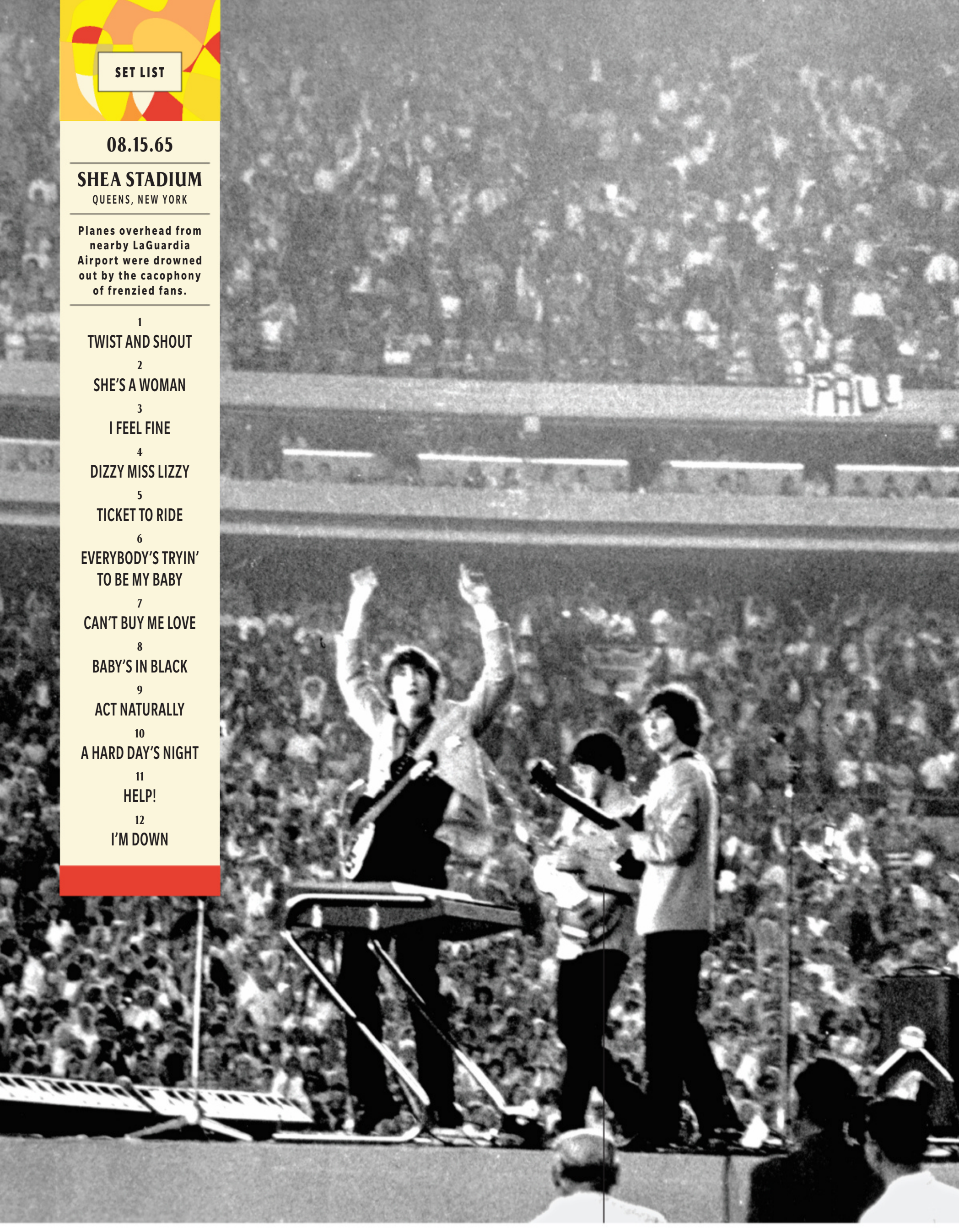
8
BABY'S IN BLACK

9
ACT NATURALLY

10
A HARD DAY'S NIGHT

11
HELP!

12
I'M DOWN



THE BEATLES ENTERED FROM the visitor's dugout and took the stage near second base at Shea Stadium on August 15, 1965, to perform in the first major outdoor stadium concert in the United States.

noted, "there was enough money for everybody in the world."

To understand just how music was changing in 1964, consider this: When the Beatles finally were displaced from the No. 1 spot on the U.S. charts, in May, after 14 consecutive weeks atop the *Billboard* Hot 100, the man who did so was 62-year-old Louis Armstrong, with the title song from the musical *Hello Dolly!* Both the artist and the genre were born in another epoch of American life.

Despite that brief musical resurgence of an earlier generation, the Beatles' success was making rock 'n' roll the most popular music in the world. By 1965, when they were awarded the MBE (Member of the Order of the British Empire) in the throne room at Buckingham Palace, even Queen Elizabeth II was at least vaguely aware of their work. "Have you been together long?" she asked McCartney.

"Yes, many years," he replied.

The generational divide was hardly closed. Lennon claims they smoked weed in a bathroom at Buckingham Palace—a claim the other Beatles denied—and several previous MBE recipients returned their medals rather than share the honor with a long-haired rock band. George and Paul would wear their medals on the *Sgt. Pepper* album cover despite—or maybe because of—the deep ambivalence they felt about becoming part of the Establishment. The Beatles were a multinational corporation, expected to gross $100 million in 1965—more than $800 million in today's dollars. Lennon and McCartney shared a 30 percent stake in Northern Songs, Ltd., which owned their catalogue and was listed on the London Stock Exchange. This meant Paul owned just 15 percent of "Yesterday," a song that was entirely his creation. Even so, an industry analyst warned investors that Northern Songs shares were "a downright gamble" given that "John and Paul could be gone and forgotten a couple of years from now."

Lennon and McCartney split

GEORGE, BRIAN EPSTEIN, Ringo, Paul, John, and chauffeur Alf Bicknell flew to the Philippines on July 3, 1966, during the band's final world tour for what would be a disastrous and dangerous visit.

publishing royalties on their songs, but the four Beatles had equal shares of other revenue, from record sales, concerts, and merchandise. Brian Epstein, under the terms of his original contract with the band, got 25 percent of the Beatles' gross revenues. And yet, more than 90 percent of the money the Beatles were earning was going to tax collectors in Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs authority. "That's one for you nineteen for me / 'Cause I'm the taxman," as George would put it a year later, in "Taxman," on the *Revolver* LP, one of countless examples of the Beatles finding artistic inspiration everywhere—even in the confiscatory British tax code.

The Lennon-McCartney partnership often worked like this: Paul would drive to John's house in Weybridge, in the stockbroker belt outside London, and sometimes wait by the pool while John slept in, and the two would eventually compose something, finding inspiration in whatever was at hand. John borrowed phrases from a poster he found in an antique shop advertising a Victorian-era circus performance for "Being for the Benefit of Mr. Kite!" When Paul's driving license had been suspended, he took a limo to Lennon's house and asked the chauffeur how business was. Busy, came the reply. "Working eight days a week." Paul repeated the phrase to John and they wrote the song in an hour.

The spark could have been almost anything. A feature on an aspiring author in the *Daily Mail* became "Paperback Writer." A news item about 4,000 potholes in Blackburn, Lancashire, bloomed into "A Day in the Life." John saw the phrase "Happiness Is a Warm Gun" in an article in a firearms magazine. When Lennon spent several hours one day trying and failing to write a song, he lay down and was visited by one: The music and lyrics to "Nowhere Man" arrived unbidden. Later, on one of his visits to Weybridge, after Lennon had separated from his first wife, Cynthia, Paul would write a song to cheer up their young son, Julian, changing "Hey Jules" to "Hey Jude" for the record.

There were now plenty of songs, and merchandise of every description—wigs, wallets, dolls, headphones, hair spray, handbags, board games, record players, and Beatle Bar ice cream novelties, to name a small sampling—but also another comic film in the works, called *Help!* to say nothing of live concerts to perform in the largest possible venues. That meant outdoor sports stadiums, with the music piped over the screaming throngs through the wholly inadequate public address system.

On a mid-August day in 1965, the Beatles caused the standard near-riot when they rocked up at London Airport in a fleet of Rolls-Royces. In front of 400 fans, many watching from a rooftop, and 40 photographers fist-fighting for positions, the Beatles embarked on another chaotic trip. They carried flight bags emblazoned BOAC, for British Overseas Airways Corporation, the airline they'd commemorate three years later in the opening line for "Back in the U.S.S.R." For now, though, they were going back to the U.S. of A., starting in New York City.

The Beatles left the Warwick Hotel in midtown Manhattan—their New York redoubt since the *Sullivan* show, when the Plaza had to keep fans at bay behind police barricades—for a downtown helipad, from which they flew to the former World's Fair grounds and were driven in a Wells Fargo armored truck next door to Shea Stadium. The date was August 15, 1965, and the Beatles were about to usher in the age of arena rock superstardom.

Fifty-five thousand people amassed in the stands, including Barbara Bach (who would become Ringo's second wife) and her sister, Marjorie (who would marry another rock star, Joe Walsh). Two thousand more fans were massed outside the gates, some of them using police barricades to make a ladder in an effort to climb inside. The Beatles played for 30 minutes, before a dozen cameras from ABC television for a future network special, and were guaranteed $100,000. But all anyone really heard was screaming—not the blimps, planes, and helicopters overhead—just

the shrieking of fans, a portent of all Beatles live shows to come.

"People were saying, 'Doesn't it drive you mad, all these girls screaming?'" McCartney would recall. "We didn't mind, because sometimes it covered a multitude of sins. We were out of tune? It didn't matter. We couldn't hear it, nor could they."

"We played for four or five years being completely heard and it was good fun," Lennon said. "And it's just as good fun to play being not heard and being more popular. They pay the money—if they want to scream, scream. We scream, literally. We're just screaming at them, only with guitars. Everybody's screaming—there's no harm in it."

Eventually all the shrieking *would* matter—would deafen them to their own performances, dissuade them from playing concerts, and drive them into the solitude of the studio. But in those first days the screaming was a thrill. The crowd at Shea Stadium screamed so intensely that all the band heard was Ringo's count-in. Some of the teenage girls wore sandwich boards

The Beatles found ARTISTIC INSPIRATION everywhere, even in the confiscatory British tax code.

that read, "Paul, Don't Marry Jane," for it appeared there was a wedding in the offing between McCartney and English actress Jane Asher, with whom he lived in the Asher family home, at 57 Wimpole Street in London.

Asher's father, Richard, was a physician—he gave Munchausen syndrome its name—and her mother, Margaret, was a musician and music teacher. (One of her oboe pupils had been George Martin.) In his room on the top floor of the Asher family home, McCartney literally dreamt a melody that the musical polymath Martin didn't recognize. "It's yours," he told McCartney, who gave it dummy lyrics: "Scrambled eggs, oh my darling how I love your legs…" Eventually, he found more dignified words, but the other Beatles reportedly didn't care for the song's easy-listening vibe. McCartney initially resisted Martin's idea to put a string quartet on the record. "[But] his idea," said McCartney, "obviously worked." "Scrambled Eggs," after turning into "Yesterday," became one of the most recorded songs in history, interpreted by—among countless others—Elvis Presley.

In these interludes off the road, returned to England, able to hear themselves think and play after the stadium cacophonies, the Beatles explored new sounds at Abbey Road, where they felt in control. "Finally, we took over the studio," is how Lennon put it to *Rolling Stone* founder Jann Wenner in a 1970 interview. While recording *Rubber Soul* in 1965, George played a sitar on "Norwegian Wood," hinting at the Eastern mysticism to come. Martin played a baroque-sounding piano on the bridge to "In My Life." That piano,

THE BEATLES TOOK THE STAGE at the Nippon Budokan in Tokyo on July 2, 1966, to an appreciative but subdued crowd—and discovered they could actually hear themselves play. Opposite: Backstage at Ernst Merck Halle in Hamburg, Germany, on June 26, 1966.

sped up on tape, is often mistaken for a harpsichord. These are songs unlike any the Beatles had played before. In that time the band was high on life, to say nothing of marijuana, to which Bob Dylan had introduced them at a party in New York. (Dylan had misheard the line "I can't hide" in "I Want to Hold Your Hand" as "I get high.") Paul sang *en français* on "Michelle," with lyrical help from Jan Vaughan, wife of his old mate Ivan, and John conceived the middle eight, "I love you, I love you, I love you . . ."

The album was innovative and corner-turning, and—though it was also reefer-fueled—their relentless commitment to the music and their jobs hadn't dimmed. The Beatles began work on *Rubber Soul* at Abbey Road in October, finished in November, and the album was in stores, as demanded, three shopping weeks before Christmas, along with a double A-side single of "We Can Work It Out" and "Day Tripper." Decades later, when the biographer Philip Norman finished writing *Paul McCartney: A Life,* he told his subject what impressed him most: "I've been astounded by the work ethic."

Their work was informed by their leisure time, to be sure. After a dinner party in a London home, John and Cynthia Lennon and George Harrison and Pattie Boyd (Harrison's wife, whom he had met on the set of *A Hard Day's Night*) finished their coffee at the insistence of their host, a London dentist-to-the-stars named John Riley. Only when they had drained the last dregs did Riley inform the four that he had laced their coffee with LSD. They were by turns horrified and enraged, but quickly embraced the drug.

The next album, *Revolver,* was released in the summer of 1966, as the Beatles were playing their last ever concerts, and as such the album featured songs that would never have to be played live. The band could now afford to be sonically experimental, owing in some part to their newfound interest in LSD, as when John, on "Tomorrow Never Knows," sang a line from *The Psychedelic Experience: A Manual Based on the Tibetan Book of the Dead,* coauthored by the former Harvard psychologist and LSD advocate Timothy Leary: "Turn off your mind, relax, and float downstream."

And the Beatles did just that. At a house in the Hollywood Hills, John, George, and Ringo dropped acid with the actor Peter Fonda, who kept repeating, to their eventual boredom, "I know what it's like to be dead," a line John

JOHN IN CHICAGO AFTER A press conference on August 12, 1966, to address his comment that the Beatles were more popular than Jesus. Opposite: Beatles albums were burned in Georgia in response to John's misunderstood statement.

PHOTOGRAPH © HARRY BENSON 1966

used in "She Said She Said." The song "Doctor Robert"—"If you're down he'll pick you up / Doctor Robert / Take a drink from his special cup"—is an unambiguous ode to pharmaceuticals on *Revolver*. And McCartney said the "you" in "Got to Get You into My Life" is marijuana.

The Beatles were experimenting with more than controlled substances. On "For No One," they commissioned a French horn solo. In the car on the way to John's house, Paul came up with the inquiry-letter framework for "Paperback Writer." (He often left the radio off on his drives to Lennon's house so that the only music he heard was the music that came into his head.) Arriving in Weybridge on another day, Paul waited for John by the pool and passed the time by writing "Here There and Everywhere," which John would call one of his favorite songs, a compliment that McCartney never forgot.

How often did John praise Paul in person? Once, Paul claimed in an interview with *60 Minutes* in 2019. "Once John gave me a compliment. It was only once, the whole time . . . It was 'Here, There and Everywhere' . . . John says just when it finishes, 'That's a really good song, lad. I love that song.' I was like, 'Yes! He likes it!'"

The Beatles still loved writing and recording, but by 1966 touring had become a joyless forced march at the hands of Brian Epstein, often demanding two shows a day, each set lasting just 30 minutes, with the band unable to hear its own songs.

The gulf was widening between their experimentation in the studio and the songs they were playing by rote in concert. An 11-day tour of Germany, Japan, and the Philippines descended

SET LIST

08.29.66

CANDLESTICK PARK

SAN FRANCISCO

The Beatles carried cameras to capture themselves and the crowd during their last performance on tour, snapping perhaps the earliest selfies.

1
ROCK AND ROLL MUSIC

2
SHE'S A WOMAN

3
IF I NEEDED SOMEONE

4
DAY TRIPPER

5
BABY'S IN BLACK

6
I FEEL FINE

7
YESTERDAY

8
I WANNA BE YOUR MAN

9
NOWHERE MAN

10
PAPERBACK WRITER

11
LONG TALL SALLY

into chaos in Manila when the band declined a visit with First Lady Imelda Marcos at the presidential palace, to which she had invited—unbeknownst to the Beatles—hundreds of school children expecting to have lunch with the Fab Four. Local media stirred an angry mob that cursed and jostled the terrified Beatles at the Manila airport. "I was petrified," Lennon said, by the violence suddenly engulfing the band, whose members resolved to stop touring once they'd fulfilled their commitments.

Beatlemania had become scary. And it was to get worse. In an interview published in March 1966 that stirred no controversy whatsoever in the U.K., Lennon told one of the Beatles-favored journalists, Maureen Cleave of the London *Evening Standard*: "Christianity will go. It will vanish and shrink. I needn't argue about that. I'm right and I will be proved right. We're more popular than Jesus now. I don't

THE BEATLES CLOSED OUT Candlestick Park with "Long Tall Sally," the opening song from their 1960 breakthrough performance at Liverpool's Litherland Town Hall, ground zero for Beatlemania.

know which will go first, rock 'n' roll or Christianity. Jesus was all right but his disciples were thick and ordinary."

A bit grandiose, to put it mildly, but Lennon was not just criticizing organized religion and puffing up his band's importance. He was suggesting that the Beatles had become altogether too big and were enveloped by an unwarranted religious fervor. "Crippled people were constantly being brought backstage to be touched by 'a Beatle,'" Ringo Starr recalled in his interview for *The Beatles Anthology*. "And it was very strange."

It wasn't until July, when Cleave's story was republished in an American magazine called *Datebook,* that Lennon's more-popular-than-Jesus comment ignited—literally, in some cases—a small firestorm among fans, deejays, parents, and clergymen, particularly in the American South.

When the Beatles departed London in August for the final leg of their world tour—18 shows in 18 days in the United States—their teenage fans in England gathered to send them off. "I pray to John, not Jesus," a 15-year-old girl told a wire-service reporter at London Airport, a sentiment seldom said out loud in the United States. In flying them across the Atlantic, Pan Am made a point of placing Bibles in the Beatles' seats. "As far as we are concerned," said an airline spokesman, in what sounded like a repudiation, "the Beatles are in American territory as soon as they board the plane."

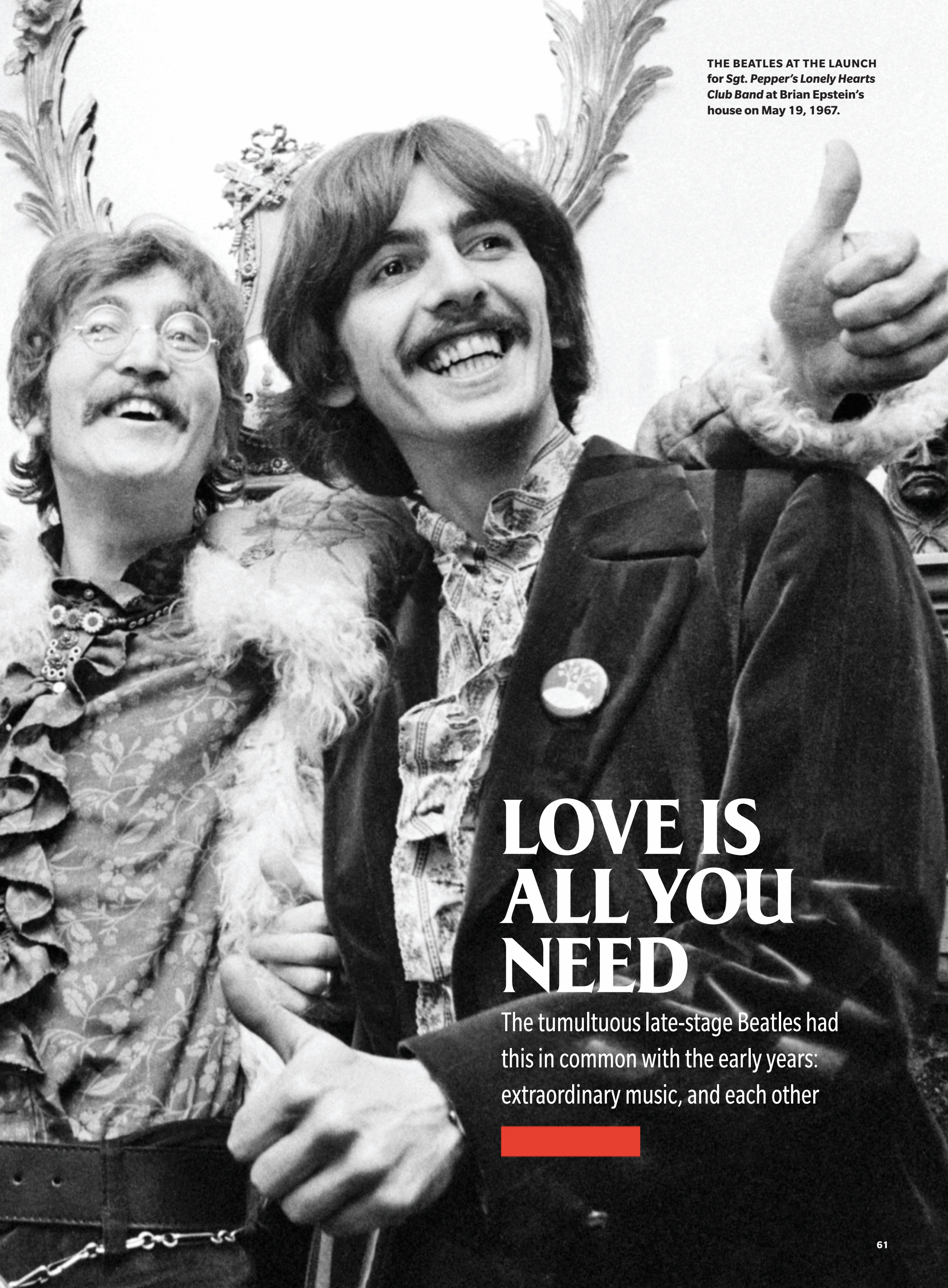
John apologized in a press conference for his alleged blasphemy, but Beatles records were being burned, and the band—denounced from pulpits every Sunday—began receiving death threats. Klansmen rallied outside their gig in Memphis. When a firecracker went off during that concert, each of the Beatles thought one of their bandmates had been assassinated. The violence that now shadowed the band was a frightening counterpoint to their music, which most in the audience still couldn't hear over the public address. The novelty of merely seeing the Beatles had worn off. Eleven thousand seats went unsold to the Beatles Shea Stadium concert on August 23, 1966.

By August 29, at Candlestick Park outside San Francisco, the tour's final stop, the Beatles knew it was the end. They opened with Chuck Berry's "Rock and Roll Music" and played 11 songs.

Relieved from touring—John said, "I reckon we could send out four waxwork dummies of ourselves and that would satisfy the crowds"—the band members could return to their own schedules and interests. At a gallery, John met an artist named Yoko Ono. Paul split his lip in a moped accident in Liverpool and grew a mustache to cover the holes left by the stitches. George traveled to India and grew a mustache to disguise himself. John and Ringo grew mustaches too, and longer hair. "We were gradually turning into Sgt. Peppers," Ringo said in *The Beatles Anthology*. "It was as if we were going through a metamorphosis." ●

CHAPTER

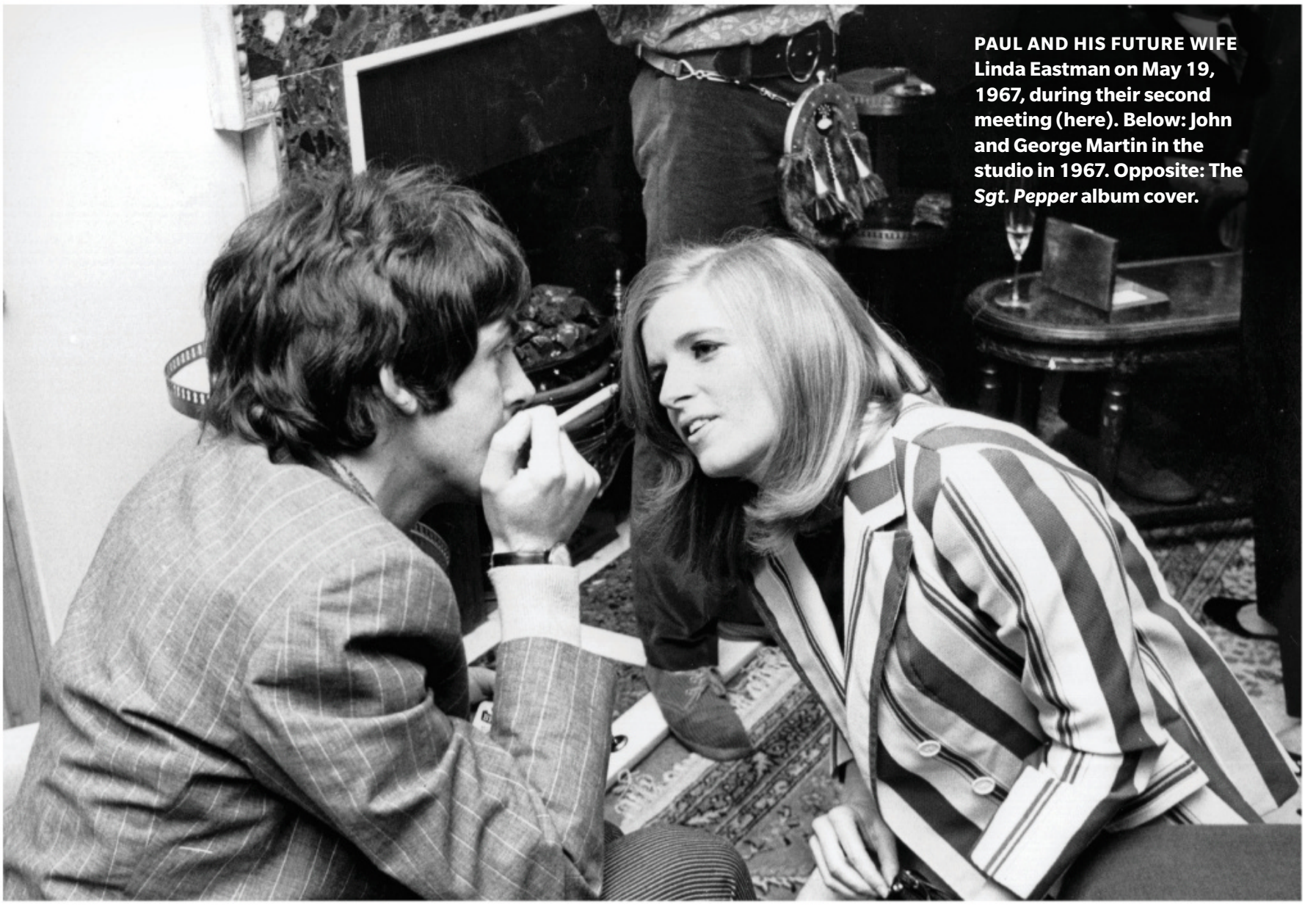
4



THE BEATLES AT THE LAUNCH for *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* at Brian Epstein's house on May 19, 1967.

LOVE IS ALL YOU NEED

The tumultuous late-stage Beatles had this in common with the early years: extraordinary music, and each other



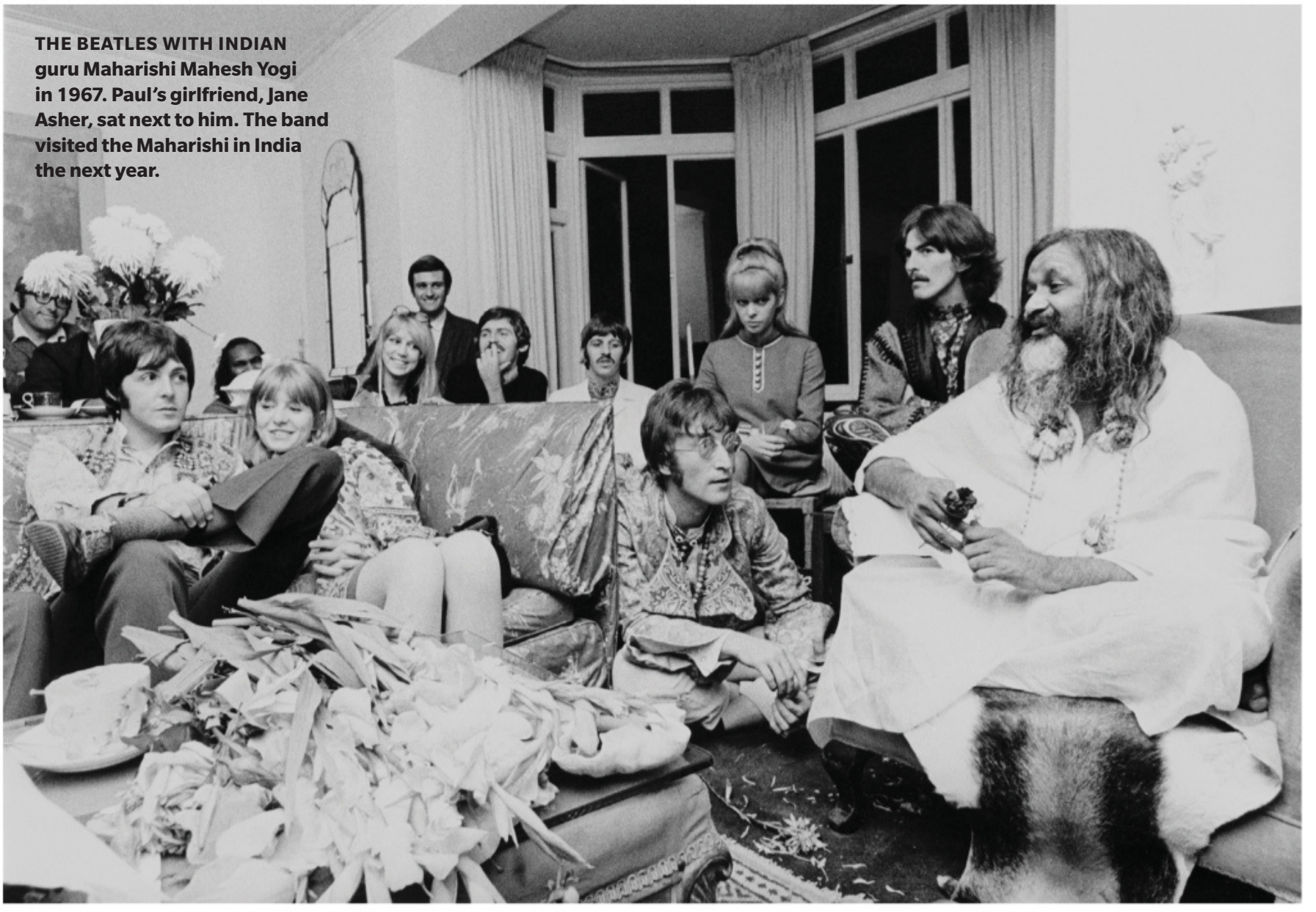
PAUL AND HIS FUTURE WIFE Linda Eastman on May 19, 1967, during their second meeting (here). Below: John and George Martin in the studio in 1967. Opposite: The *Sgt. Pepper* album cover.

The Beatles emerged from their chrysalis in 1967 as something else entirely. With the release of their new album, they hadn't just stopped touring; they had stopped being the Beatles. Well, that was the conceit anyway. McCartney dreamed up a collective alter ego for the group, partly inspired by his dad's old group, Jim Mac's Jazz Band, partly by the quirky names suddenly in vogue in rock 'n' roll—the Incredible String Band, for instance, or Big Brother and the Holding Company. The idea was that the Beatles, playing dress-up, would become another band entirely. And so in the spring of 1967 came the birth of the "concept album": *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band.*

McCartney has recalled that just a couple of days after the album's release, he and Harrison went to see Jimi Hendrix at the Saville Theatre in London, on June 4, 1967. The Seattle guitarist opened his set with the Beatles' brand-new title track, which he'd quickly taught himself in the intervening hours, an early sign that this album was perhaps one for the ages.

A few weeks later, the Beatles were the stars of the first global satellite television production, a show called "Our World," on which they performed an original song called "All You Need Is Love" live from the Abbey Road studio before a worldwide audience of as many as 400 million people. The song, and the Beatles live performance of it, helped to cement 1967 as the "Summer of Love," and the enduring artifact of that summer remains *Sgt. Pepper.*

At a time when the Who was singing "I hope I die before I get old," Paul had revived his childhood ditty "When I'm Sixty-four," imagining a quiet life for himself in retirement. The album's final track, "A Day in the Life," may be the ultimate Lennon-McCartney coproduction, regarded by many as the greatest Beatles song, featuring John's moody rumination on things he read in the newspapers—an article in the *Daily*



THE BEATLES WITH INDIAN guru Maharishi Mahesh Yogi in 1967. Paul's girlfriend, Jane Asher, sat next to him. The band visited the Maharishi in India the next year.

Mail about the 4,000 potholes on the streets of Blackburn in Lancashire, and news of the car crash death of Guinness heir Tara Browne—linked by Paul's jaunty vignette about the daily rat race.

For rock stars infatuated with pharmaceuticals, the Beatles were remarkably disciplined newspaper readers. "She's Leaving Home" on this album was inspired by a piece Paul read in the *Daily Mirror* about a 17-year-old runaway named Melanie Coe. Most of the songs on this LP are unrelated to one another—the concept of the concept album never quite cohered. And yet it felt somehow tied together in the end, by the time "A Day in the Life" plays, after which a final E chord sounds for more than 40 seconds. It is apocalyptic, like God's unanswered doorbell. David Crosby of the Byrds sat in the studio while the song was recorded and looked on in astonishment.

The *Sgt. Pepper* cover, by the English pop artist Peter Blake, is a collage every bit as iconic as the music on the LP. The Beatles chose their outfits from a London theatrical costume shop called Berman's, and Blake surrounded the bandmates with cutouts of other stars, a galaxy that includes Bob Dylan, Lewis Carroll, Lenny Bruce, James Joyce, Marilyn Monroe, and Marlon Brando.

The four of them considered buying a Greek island, an uncharacteristic act of cartoon rock-star decadence that didn't come to pass but might have served as an early sign of the decline and fall of the Beatles empire. There were other markers. *Sgt. Pepper* had an apple on its label because the band had formed its own company, Apple Corps, and created a label for new and aspiring artists, Apple Records, a business venture that would strain the seams holding the Beatles together. They got an office at 3 Savile Row in London, where Beatles fans camped outside, along with a passing parade of hangers-on and hangers-out.

Apple "scruffs," as those fans came to be known, hung around not only outside the Apple office but also the Beatles' homes, including Paul's London redoubt at 7 Cavendish Avenue in St. John's Wood, where the scruffs sometimes rang his buzzer and were favored with a chat or simply waited forever in unrequited ardor. ("See the people standing there, who disagree, and never win, and wonder why they don't get in my door," McCartney sang on "Fixing a Hole.") One of them did get in, when Paul was away: a woman climbed a ladder leaning against the house and entered through an open window and gave entrance to other fans, an intrusion immortalized on *Abbey Road* as "She Came in Through the Bathroom Window."

Other invaders came in through other doors. On a trip to California, George Harrison invited the Hell's Angels to drop by anytime. And in December of 1968 about a dozen of them flew to London to take him up on his offer. But only two Angels made it through customs and to Apple headquarters. They and some friends took up residence in the Apple offices for a week, terrorizing staff and the little

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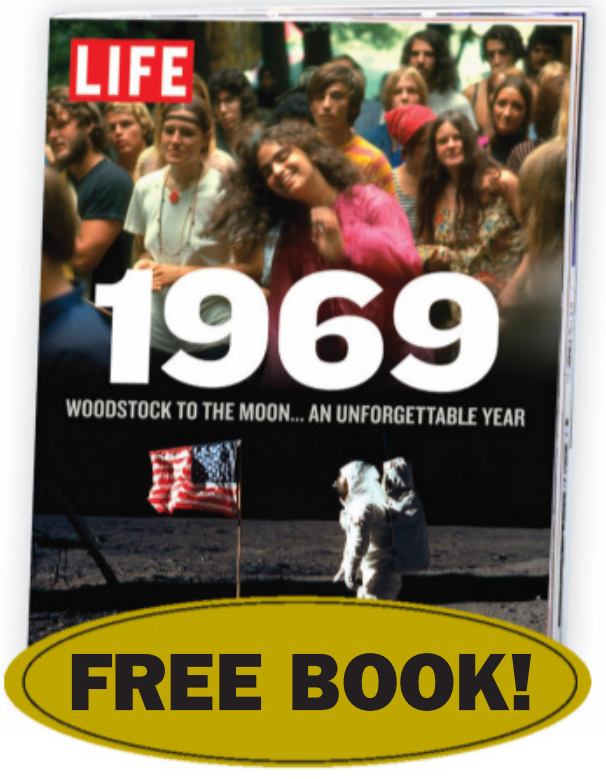

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children at the office Christmas party.

Apple would eventually sign a young American singer-songwriter named James Taylor, as well as a Welsh-English rock band called Badfinger, to whom Paul would give a hit song called "Come and Get It." Apple would sell clothing and make films and even electronics, but money was walking out the door of their expensive town house headquarters in Mayfair.

The Beatles now had countless people on their payroll: secretaries, assistants, junior press officers. Apple was funding outside art projects, seeking to produce films, and soliciting demo tapes from around the world. (The demos yielded nothing.) The Beatles

JANE ASHER, PAULA BOYD (George's sister-in-law), Paul, Julian Lennon, and John arrived in Greece on July 22, 1967.

opened an Apple clothing boutique on Baker Street and covered the four-story façade with a cosmic psychedelic mural. But because the mural had been created without proper permitting, municipal authorities forced it to be painted over. The boutique was a financial disaster, and the Beatles decided to close it and gave the inventory away. By the time they fell under the spell of a Greek man called Magic Alex, who was attempting to create a wallpaper that also acted as high-fidelity speakers, the four Beatles found they had become partners in a money-draining enterprise. "Basically I think John and Paul got carried away with the idea and blew millions," George recalled in *Anthology*. "And Ringo and I just had to go along with it." This was not a recipe for harmony. Even the Beatles were not immune to the physical law of entropy.

They were in Wales on August 27, 1967, visiting the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, when they learned that Brian Epstein had been found dead in the bedroom of his home outside London after overdosing on sleeping pills. He was 32 and his death was ruled accidental. "Brian has died only in body, and his spirit will always be working with us," said Lennon. "His power and force were everything, and his power and force will linger on. When we were on the right track, he knew it, and when we were on the wrong track, he told us so and he was usually right." Now, there was no one there to do that.

Epstein was gay, a fact known to the Beatles but not to the public, and Beatles fans have long speculated, without corroboration, that Lennon had written "You've Got to Hide Your Love Away" about him.

He's the man who brought the Beatles to America, and who planned all their tours after. When the band swore off touring, Epstein was no longer indispensable as a manager. And yet the void he left—and the search for someone to fill his unique position—would expedite the band's breakup.

Six months after Epstein's death, the Beatles returned to the Maharishi, when John, Paul, George, and Ringo, with other celebrities and assorted wives, girlfriends, and hangers-on, decamped to an ashram in Rishikesh, India, in the foothills of the Himalayas overlooking the Ganges River, to practice Transcendental Meditation. (John thought about bringing both his wife *and* his girlfriend—Cynthia and Yoko—but concluded that he couldn't pull it off.) As a hedge against Indian cuisine, Ringo smuggled in tins of Heinz baked beans, but otherwise the only reminders of their rock-star lives were the instruments they brought and the A-list friends who accompanied them. Pop star Donovan, Mike Love of the Beach Boys, and actress Mia Farrow (who brought her sister Prudence) were among those who joined the Beatles in splendid isolation, metaphorically far from the spotlight, though physically quite near to the world's media gathered outside the ashram gates.

In India, with little else to do, the exhausted Beatles convalesced from nearly five years of international superstardom. They wrote songs, including Lennon's "Dear Prudence," his effort to get Prudence Farrow, the most intense of the meditators, to come out of her room. He composed "I'm So Tired" during an extended bout of insomnia—the result of abstaining from alcohol and drugs for the first time in years. Many of these songs ended up on their next album, including "Back in the U.S.S.R.," which paid tribute to the Beach Boys' "California Girls," Hoagy Carmichael's "Georgia on My Mind," and Chuck Berry's "Back in the U.S.A.": "Well the Ukraine girls really knock me out / They leave the West behind / And Moscow girls make me sing and shout / That Georgia's always on my my my my my my my my my mind . . ." Paul also wrote the first line of "Ob-La-Di, Ob-La-Da" while walking from the ashram to the nearby village: "Desmond has a barrow in the market place."

Although the Beatles left India early—Ringo's wife, Maureen, could no longer abide the other kind of beetles in their bathroom, and they both missed their children—George remained a lifelong devotee of Indian culture and Hindu philosophy, and John would incorporate his meditation mantra ("Jai guru deva, om") into "Across the Universe." The first phrase of that song, "Words are flowing out like endless rain into a paper cup," had

THE BEATLES AND GEORGE Martin while recording "Hey Jude" in 1968. Julian Lennon was five when his parents split up—the same age as John when his father left—and Paul wrote the song to cheer him up. Opposite: John and Yoko Ono in 1968.

18+

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a more prosaic origin: Lennon thought of it while listening to Cynthia talking to him.

The album that reflects their Indian idyll is, on the surface at least, the opposite of *Sgt. Pepper's*. It came in a plain white sleeve and had the simplest possible title, leaving no ambiguity about who the band was this year: *The Beatles*. The album contained a total of 30 songs, most of them written in India. George thought *The Beatles* should have been a single LP. Ringo favored two separate albums. But the "White Album," as it is called, would be released as a double album. By putting out so many songs at once, the band could hasten the end of their EMI contract, allowing them to release Beatles records on their own Apple label. But they were also hastening the end of their creative partnership.

Yoko Ono was frequently in the studio. "It was fairly off-putting having her sitting on one of the amps," Paul said in *Anthology*. "You wanted to say, 'Excuse me, love—can I turn the volume up?'

"Brian has died only in body, and HIS SPIRIT will always be working with us," said Lennon. "His power and force were everything."

We were always wondering how to say, 'Could you get off my amp?' without interfering with their relationship. It was a very difficult time. I felt that when John finally left the group, he did it to clear the decks for his relationship." George had blossomed as a songwriter. In one instance, he resolved to open a book and create something around the first words he found there. The phrase his finger randomly fell upon was "gently weeps." When he felt Paul and John weren't sufficiently interested in recording the resulting tune—"While My Guitar Gently Weeps"—he brought in Eric Clapton to play on the record. As for Lennon and McCartney, Ringo thought they had now become Lennon *or* McCartney. In "Glass Onion," with its references to strawberry fields, Lady Madonna, the fool on the hill, and fixing a hole, John taunts those who would scrutinize his work backward and forward, decoding every phrase for hidden meanings that were never there in the first place: "Here's another clue for you all / The walrus was Paul."

As Hunter Davies noted in his authorized biography of the band, the song "I Am the Walrus" was actually inspired by Lennon's hearing a police siren near his home in Weybridge—"two notes, up and down, repeated over and over again, like a primitive wailing." Likewise, "Good Morning, Good Morning" came into being after John saw a TV commercial for Kellogg's Corn Flakes. What the Beatles actually were, and what Beatles fans believed them to be, were often two different things entirely. ●

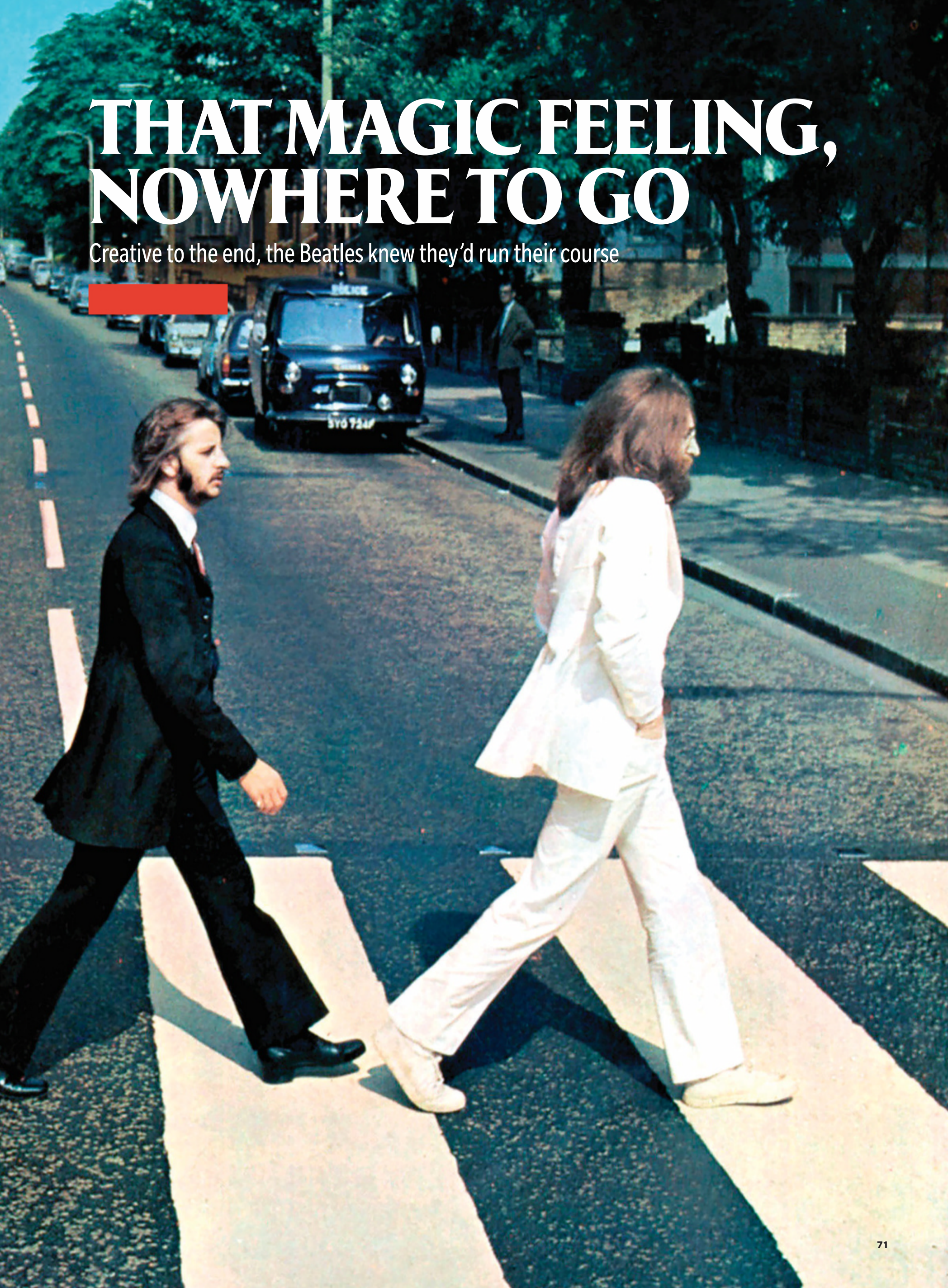
CHAPTER

5

PAUL SKETCHED THE IDEA FOR the famous *Abbey Road* photo, and the best of six shots was chosen for the band's last studio album.

THAT MAGIC FEELING, NOWHERE TO GO

Creative to the end, the Beatles knew they'd run their course



They were four evolving personalities, who were also friends, co-workers, and—for the last four years—hostages to international fame. In 1968, during the recording of the White Album, Ringo left the studio and fled with his wife, Maureen, and their children to Sardinia. He was intending to quit the Beatles, feeling superfluous to their needs, but Ringo failed in a rather spectacular way. While floating into the metaphorical sunset on Peter Sellers's yacht, listening to the captain expound on the domestic life of squid, he wrote "Octopus's Garden." Even having done so, Ringo thought he was through with the Beatles, and told John that it looked like the other three were all close and he was the one who didn't fit in, to which John replied: "I thought it was you three!" Ringo made the same claim to Paul, who told him: "I thought it was you three!"

The boys—men—still hadn't recovered from the death of Brian Epstein. Apple was hemorrhaging money. To run it, and the business of the Beatles, John wanted to hire Allen Klein, an abrasive New Yorker who managed the Rolling Stones. Lennon persuaded George and Ringo to side with him. McCartney wanted to put their affairs in the hands of a New York entertainment lawyer named Lee Eastman, whose daughter, the rock 'n' roll photographer Linda Eastman, Paul would marry on March 12, 1969, in a small ceremony at the Marylebone registry office. George was at home that day getting busted in a drug raid. The police dog on the raid was called Yogi—perhaps a sly nod to the Maharishi. "I'm a tidy man," George said of the hash he claimed was planted in his house. "I keep my socks in the sock drawer and stash in the stash box. It's not mine."

John and Yoko that spring were staging their bed-in at the Amsterdam Hilton. They spent a week in the sack in the hotel's presidential suite, inviting

THE ROOFTOP CONCERT IN London on January 30, 1969, was the band's last live performance—and first in more than two years. They played to an unseen audience on the streets below. To shield against gusty winds, the delicate microphones were wrapped in pantyhose.

SET LIST

01.30.69

APPLE CORPS

SAVILE ROW, LONDON

The Beatles performed out of usual stage order, with John in the middle and George to his left, for 42 minutes in 45-degree weather.

1
GET BACK

2
I WANT YOU
(SHE'S SO HEAVY)

3
GET BACK

4
DON'T LET ME DOWN

5
I'VE GOT A FEELING

6
ONE AFTER 909

7
DIG A PONY

8
GOD SAVE THE QUEEN

9
I'VE GOT A FEELING

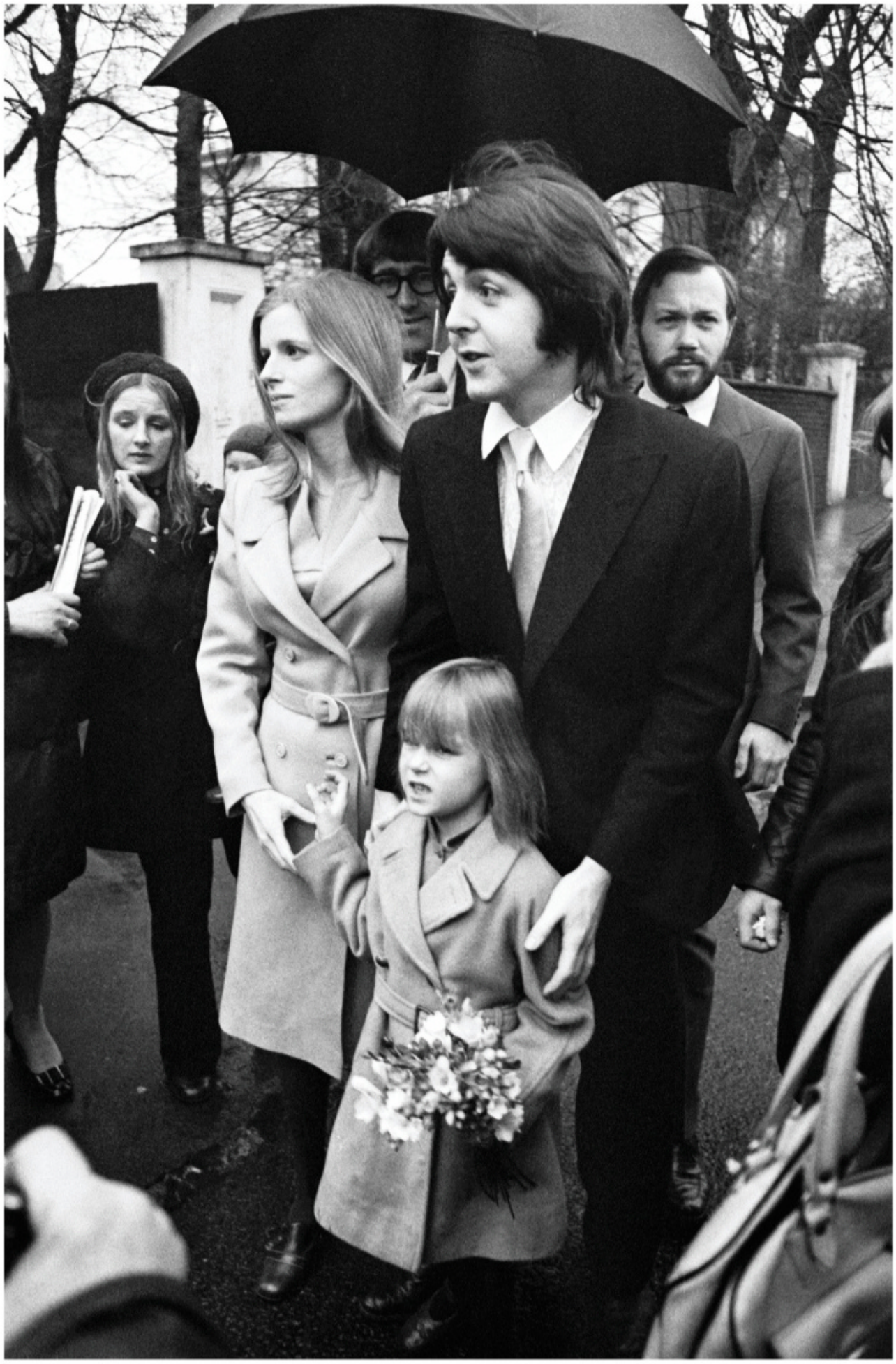
10
GET BACK

11
DON'T LET ME DOWN

12
GET BACK

reporters to interview them as they protested against the Vietnam War and promoted world peace from their supine positions. (They held another bed-in in Montreal at the Queen Elizabeth hotel.) In the fall, John would return his MBE medal to the queen, "as a protest against Britain's involvement in the Nigeria-Biafra thing, against our support of America in Vietnam, and against 'Cold Turkey' slipping down the charts," a reference to his single with the Plastic Ono Band.

Their lives, so full of incident and scrutiny, were unsustainable. For their next act, the Beatles wanted to return



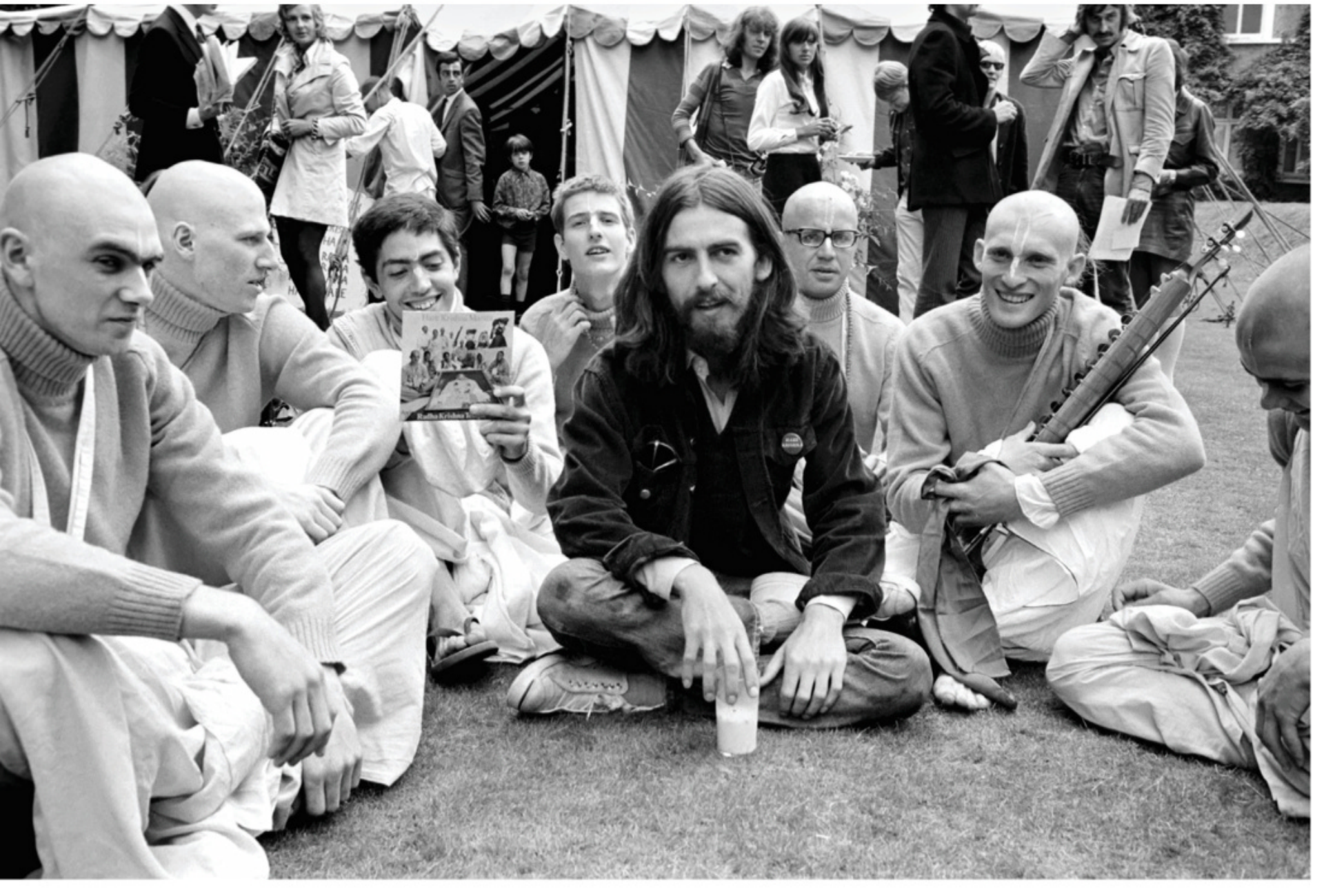
to basics, to their live roots, with a stripped-down album called—aptly enough—*Get Back.* But this effort to get back to where they once belonged had the opposite effect. By the time they were in the studio to record what was now renamed *Let It Be,* a documentary film crew was capturing the band breaking apart. Yoko Ono was now omnipresent. George and Paul argued. Harrison left Twickenham Studios, fed up with McCartney's bossiness. The band briefly entertained the notion of replacing George with Eric Clapton. The project and the documentary film were supposed to end with a live one-off concert, perhaps on an ocean liner or at a Tunisian amphitheater. But in the end, to be done with it, the band took their instruments and amps to the Apple roof at 3 Savile Row and played a windblown concert for a stunned audience of Londoners on their lunch breaks.

Five stories above their audience, with police arriving on the roof to shut them down, the Beatles were Alexander astride the globe, with no more worlds to conquer. John, wearing Yoko's fur coat, sang a new song, "Don't Let Me Down," with a line that goes "It's a love that lasts forever, it's a love that has no past." Although the

JOHN AND YOKO ONO DURING their honeymoon bed-in for peace in Amsterdam in March 1969, above. Opposite: Paul and Linda Eastman married March 12, 1969, with Linda's daughter, Heather, in attendance.

song was written about his relationship with his soon-to-be wife, one can't help but hear references to the childhood friends from Liverpool, now breaking up but forever linked, even as John offered a rooftop valedictory that echoes back to their common youth and hometown. "I'd like to say thank you on behalf of the group and ourselves," he announced. "And I hope we passed the audition."

The *Let It Be* tapes lay fallow, unfinished, and perhaps unfinishable—hours and hours of film and audio tape, a chronicle of rancor—but the Beatles, as ever, needed to put out an album in its place. So they returned to the Abbey Road studios to record an LP they intended to call *Everest,* after the brand of cigarettes smoked by



their engineer, Geoff Emerick.

Everest was an appropriate title, for everything was now an uphill climb for the band, in often frigid conditions, with occasional breaks in the clouds that revealed breathtaking beauty. George, while playing hooky from Apple, went on a sunny spring day to Eric Clapton's house and wrote "Here Comes the Sun" while walking around Clapton's garden with a guitar. He had written "Something" during the White Album sessions. John brought "Come Together," with its Chuck Berry nod: "Here come old flat top." The album was filled out with scraps from previous recording sessions, including John's "Polythene Pam," and Paul's 90-second lullaby, "Golden Slumbers," which was sewn together in a patchwork quilt with "Carry That Weight" and "The End," the latter featuring guitar solos by John, George, and Paul and a drum solo by Ringo: all hands on deck for the album's finale.

For the cover, they gave photographer Iain MacMillan 30 minutes to shoot them in the zebra crossing outside the studio. It was August and the city was seething so Paul kicked off his sandals and walked barefoot. None of them knew it would be the last album they would record, but it felt like the end to all of them.

Q: Do you foresee a time when LENNON-MCCARTNEY becomes an active songwriting partnership again?

A: No.

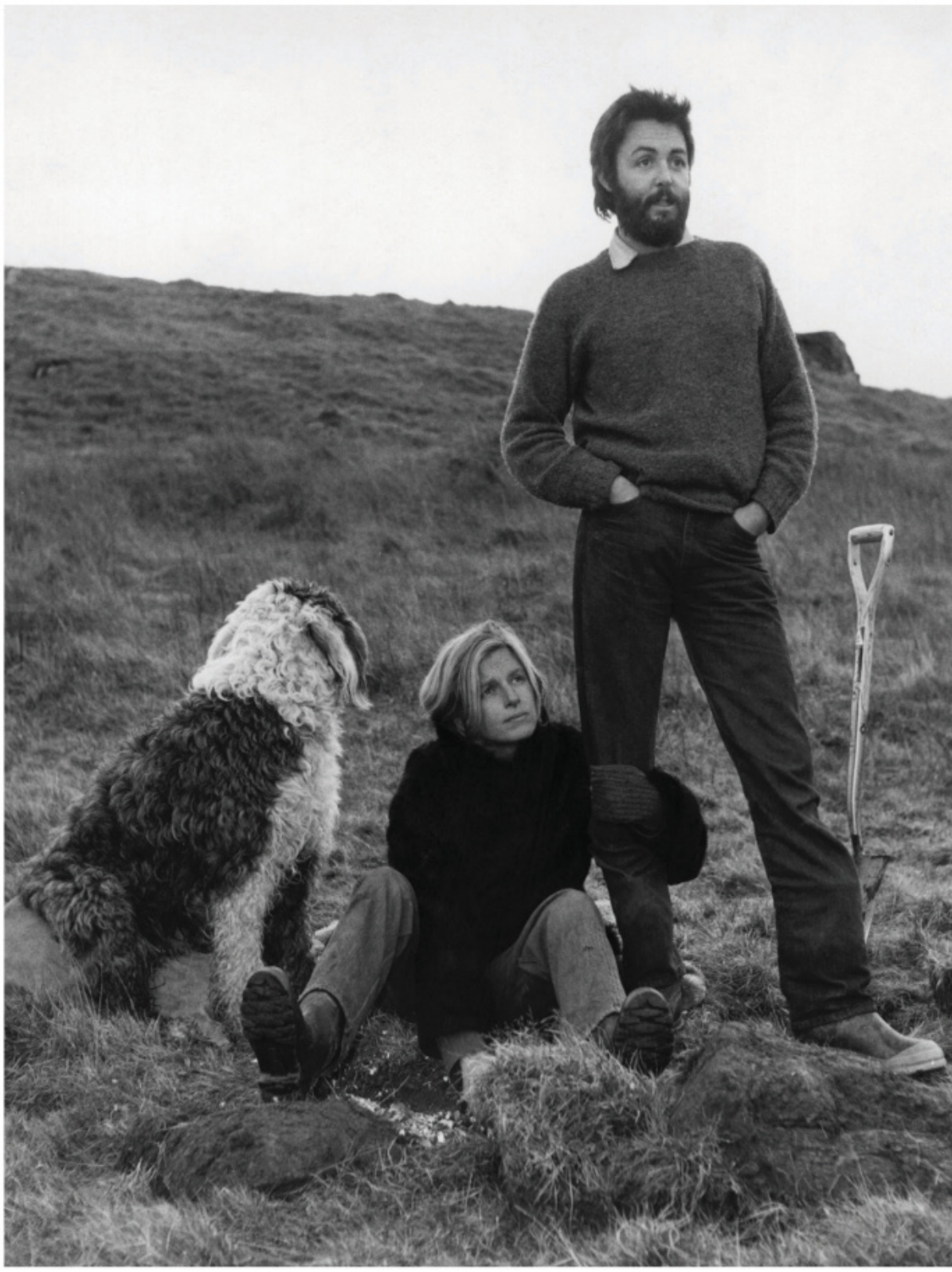
John went off with the Plastic Ono Band, and, at a meeting at Apple in September 1969—shortly after the band signed a new contract with EMI that would run through 1976—Lennon told his bandmates he was leaving the Beatles, a fact that wasn't made public. This marked the third time a Beatle had left, after Ringo and George. The others weren't convinced that John was leaving, and when it became clear that he was serious, they went their separate ways, Paul retreating with Linda and their children to Scotland.

The dissolution of the world's most influential rock band was not the stellar explosion one expects of a dying star. The Beatles breakup was—like Al Capone getting sent away for tax evasion or Harry Houdini dying of a burst appendix—an end utterly out of tune with all that had come before it. Indeed, even with the band breaking apart, the business of the Beatles continued; another album was forthcoming: Commerce, and the public, demanded it.

Allen Klein asked Phil Spector to produce, or rather re-produce, *Let*

RINGO AND RAQUEL WELCH horse around on the London set of 1969's *The Magic Christian,* which featured the song "Come and Get It"—written by Paul and a veiled dig at new manager Allen Klein. Opposite: Harrison in 1969 with devotees of the Hindu Radha Krishna Temple.

JOHN AND YOKO, COVERED IN white next to him, performed with the Plastic Ono Band at the Lyceum Ballroom in London on December 15, 1969. Opposite: Paul and Linda with their dog Martha on their Scottish farm in February 1971, 10 months after the Beatles broke up.



It Be as the last Beatles album, without the knowledge or cooperation of McCartney, who especially disliked the wall of sound treatment on "The Long and Winding Road." (The album was rereleased as *Let It Be . . . Naked,* stripped of Spector's heavy hand, in 2003, the same year the producer was charged with murdering a woman in his Los Angeles home, a crime for which he would be convicted.)

Because the release date of *Let It Be* coincided with the scheduled release of Paul's solo album, *McCartney,* the other Beatles "asked" him to change his plans. Ringo went to Paul's house to present him with this demand, and Paul threw him out. McCartney released *McCartney* as planned on April 17, 1970, three weeks before *Let It Be* came out.

In this poisonous atmosphere, Paul chose not to do any press at all to promote his solo debut, but instead sent out a press release in the form of an interview, in which he never quite said that the Beatles were over, but certainly spoke as if they were:

Q: Is your break with the Beatles temporary or permanent, due to personal differences or musical ones?

A: Personal differences, business differences, musical differences, but most of all because I have a better time with my family. Temporary or permanent? I don't really know.

Q: Do you foresee a time when Lennon-McCartney becomes an active songwriting partnership again?

A: No.

"We were actually all probably very nervous about suddenly being on our own," John would say later, "although we all really wanted to get away from each other for a bit after living in a room together for 10 years. And then suddenly you're on your own."

So the Beatles had broken up, even if the public—and maybe even the Beatles—didn't know. Paul dropped a fairly clear hint when a reporter for LIFE tracked him to his farm in Scotland and found him in a melancholy mood, not eager to talk to the press—"I have done enough press for a lifetime"—but willing to speak briefly nonetheless, if only to dispel the persistent rumor that he was dead. That talk had started in October 1969 when an American deejay suggested that all the signs were on the *Abbey Road* cover, including Paul's bare feet, the cigarette, and the "28IF" on the license plate behind them, intimating that Paul would be 28 *if* he were alive. (In fact he was 27.)

"I was switched on for 10 years and I never switched off," McCartney said to the LIFE reporter, for an issue whose cover read PAUL IS STILL WITH US. "Now I am switching off whenever I can. I would rather be a little less famous these days. I would rather do what I began by doing, which is making music. We make good music and we want to go on making good music. But the Beatle thing is over. It has been exploded, partly by what we have done, and partly by other people. We are individuals—all different. John married Yoko, I married Linda. We didn't marry the same girl."

In the summer of 1969, the murderous cult leader Charles Manson had invoked "Helter Skelter" from the White Album as an inspiration, perverting the Beatles' persistent message of peace and love. "What I have to say is all in the music," McCartney said to the LIFE reporter in parting. "If I want to say anything, I write a song. Can you spread it around that I am just an ordinary person, and want to live in peace?" ●

CHAPTER

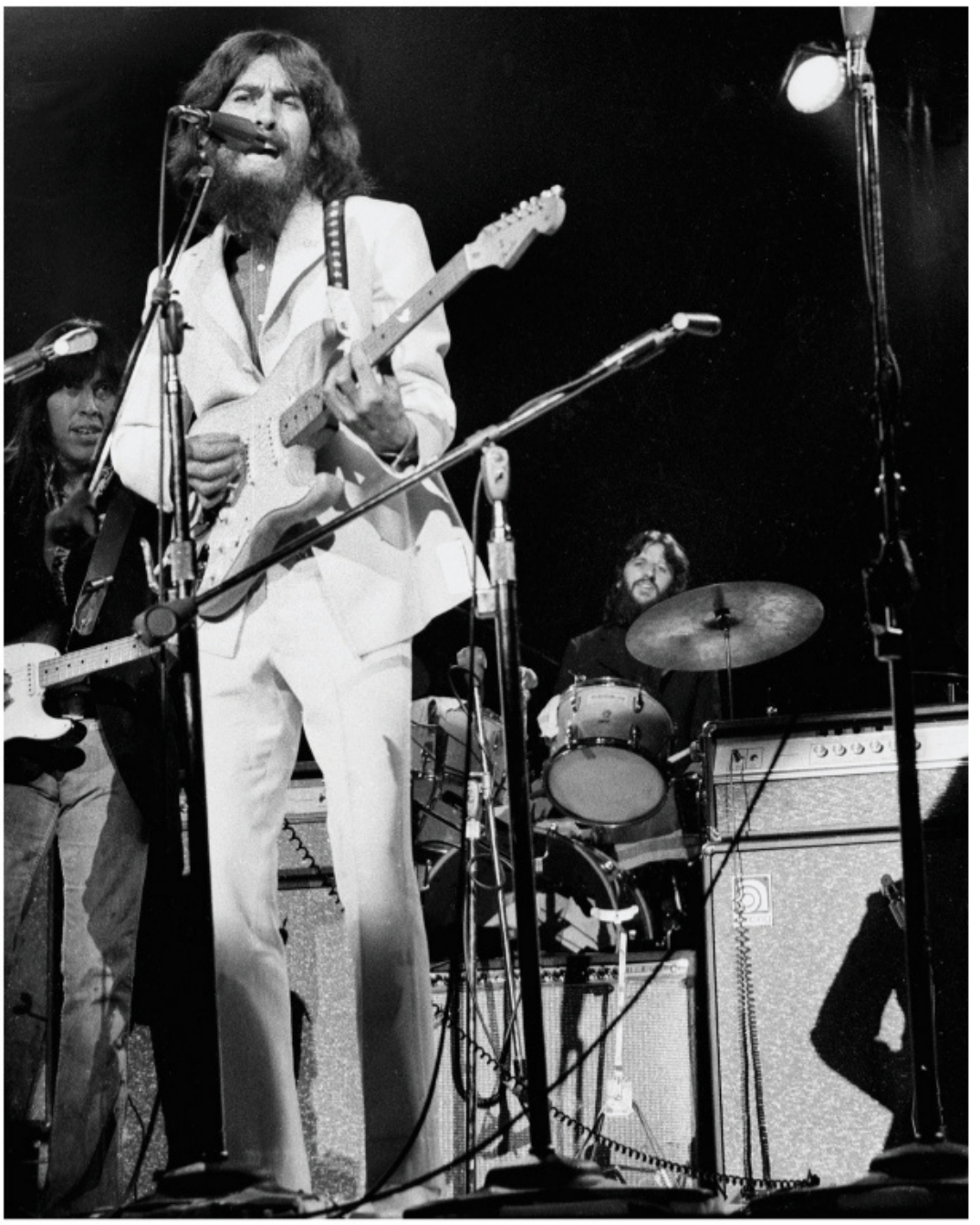
6

YOKO ONO AND SON SEAN IN 1985 at Strawberry Fields, a memorial to John in New York's Central Park, where he often walked. Sean was 5 when John was killed on December 8, 1980, in front of the Dakota, the building where the family lived.

IT'S A LOVE THAT LASTS FOREVER

John Lennon and George Harrison are gone, but the surviving Beatles shine on. And some things remain eternal: the music, the songs, the feeling inside

PHOTOGRAPH © HARRY BENSON 1985



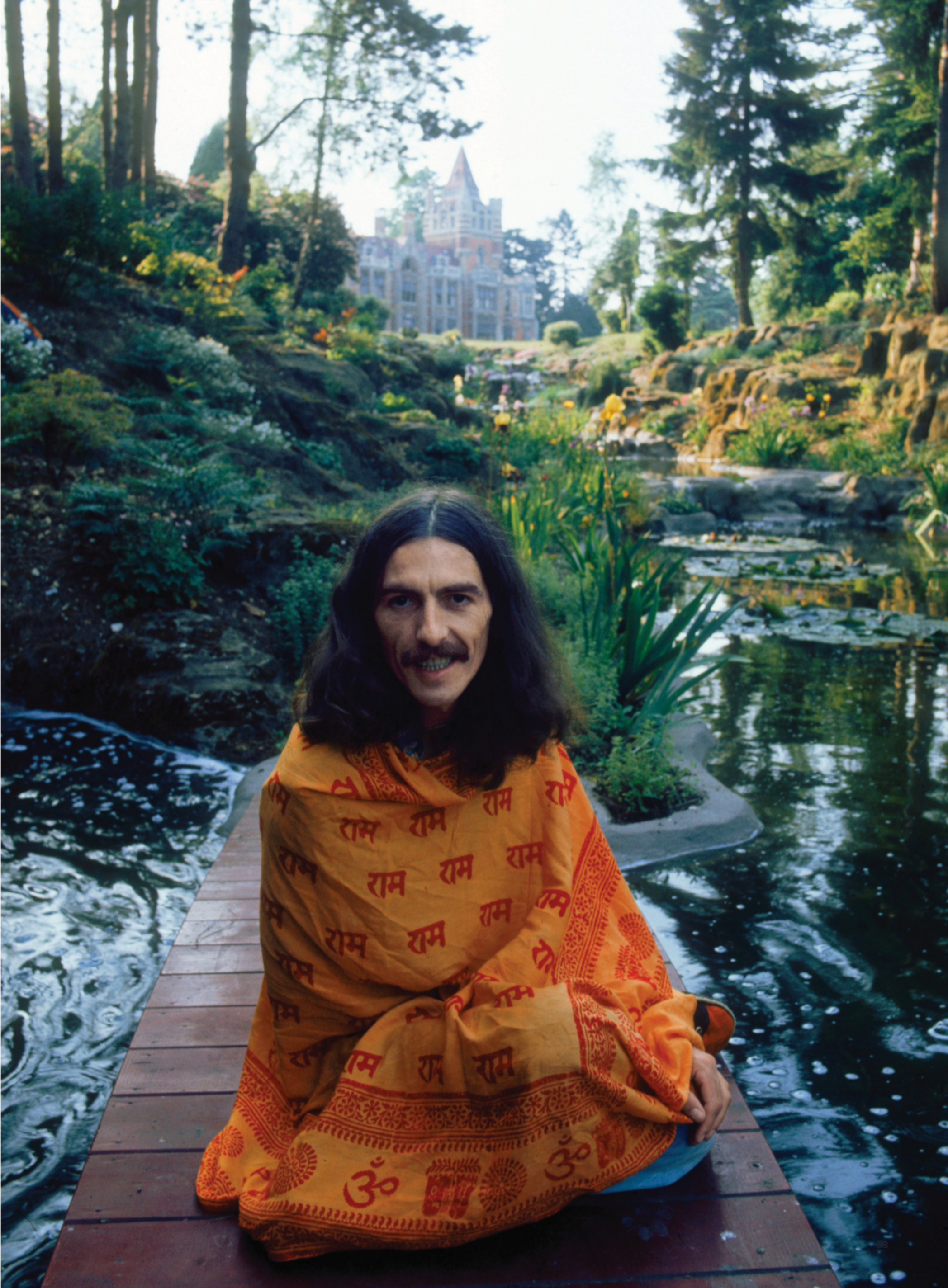
GEORGE AT FRIAR PARK, HIS estate outside London, in 1975, opposite. Above: George and Ringo played the benefit Concert for Bangladesh at Madison Square Garden on August 1, 1971.

The Beatles weren't allowed to live in peace, or even to end, not even temporarily. ("You don't turn the key and hear, 'Okay, you're not a Beatle anymore,' Ringo said in *Anthology.* "Because out there, to this day, that's all I am.") For one thing, the music never stopped. When McCartney released his solo album in April of 1970, it featured "Maybe I'm Amazed," which sounded like another Beatles hit.

Lennon and Yoko Ono appeared on *The Dick Cavett Show* a year later, a day before the release of John's album *Imagine.* John dismissed the popular charge that she had broken up the Beatles: "She didn't split the Beatles, because how could one girl split the Beatles, or one woman?" John said. "The Beatles were drifting apart on their own." He suggested that the Beatles had done their fans a favor by disbanding: "We don't want to be . . . dragged on stage playing 'She Loves You' when we've got asthma and tuberculosis when we're 50." He imitated an emcee: "*Here they are again,*" before gumming, "Yesterday, all my troubles . . ." The audience roared. "A long time ago," he went on, "I said that I didn't want to be singing 'She Loves You' when I'm 30. I said that when I was about 25." Lennon was by then a month shy of his 31st birthday.

George Harrison released a *triple* album, *All Things Must Pass,* with the classics "My Sweet Lord" and "What Is Life," in November 1970. He produced Ringo's solo hit, "It Don't Come Easy," a top four hit on both sides of the Atlantic in the spring of 1971. That fall, Lennon released the magisterial *Imagine,* whose title song *Rolling Stone* would name, in 2004, the third greatest song of all time, five spots ahead of "Hey Jude," McCartney's tribute to Lennon's son Julian.

Harrison's Concert for Bangladesh, two shows at Madison Square Garden on August 1, 1971, reunited him with Starr and the organist on *Let It Be,* Billy Preston. It was clear, fairly quickly, that the Beatles hadn't ended with the '60s. And yet, with all this timeless music still emanating from the constituent parts of the band, fans and promoters from the moment they broke up were clamoring to reunite the band. This effort reached its comical apotheosis when producer Lorne Michaels appeared on *Saturday Night Live* in 1976 to offer the Beatles a check for "three *thousand* dollars"—upped a month later to $3,200, "an extra 50 dollars for each of you, that's if you split it equally," plus a Checker cab ride to the Crosstown Motor Inn "located in the heart of New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PAUL PERFORMED ON September 22, 1975, with (from left) Jimmy McCulloch, Denny Laine, and Linda McCartney in Wings, the band he formed in 1971 whose name was inspired by a vision of his mother during daughter Stella's difficult birth.

York's fashionable Garment District"—if they would reunite to perform three songs of their choice.

And so it went, a long and winding road without end. A *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* movie came out in 1978, narrated by George Burns, with a cast that included Peter Frampton, the Bee Gees, Steve Martin, and Alice Cooper. George's friend Eric Idle, of Monty Python, produced *All You Need Is Cash,* a mockumentary, among the first of its genre, about a British rock band called the Rutles, one of many popular iterations of the Beatles that began with the Monkees and continued with the ageless cover band Beatlemania.

By 1980, rock 'n' roll had a new order

In December 1980, McCartney was home alone in London when he received A PHONE CALL early in the morning.

whose avant-garde included New Order, which formed in 1976 after two of its members attended a concert by the Sex Pistols, English progenitors of punk rock. Punk was fast, angry, and anarchic, rejecting the sheen and polish and excess of the rock that had gone before it. On *London Calling,* released in the United States in January of 1980, the Clash announced "phony Beatlemania has bitten the dust."

By the end of that year, the line would take on a terrible poignancy. John Lennon was murdered outside his residence at the Dakota apartment building on the Upper West Side of Manhattan on December 8, 1980. The man who sang "All You Need Is Love" and "Give Peace a Chance"; who sang "Life is very short and there's no time for fussing and fighting, my friend";

who wrote, "Life is what happens to you while you're busy making other plans"; whose song "Happiness Is a Warm Gun" was meant as an absurdist irony; that man was shot to death by a deranged "fan" for whom he had autographed an album earlier in the day.

In December 1980, McCartney was home alone in London when he received a phone call early in the morning. "John was a great man who will be sadly missed by the whole world," he said in a statement, "but remembered for his unique contribution to art, music, and world peace."

"It is especially poignant," said President Jimmy Carter, "that John Lennon has died by violence, though he had long campaigned for peace."

In a spot in Central Park, not far from the Dakota, dedicated as Strawberry Fields, there remains a daily shrine to John Winston Ono Lennon, with whom McCartney had reconciled. They saw each other several times and talked on the phone occasionally, sometimes about John's newfound passion for baking bread. Harrison wrote a tribute to Lennon in song, "All Those Years Ago," including the lyric "You point the way to the truth when you say, All you need is love."

Even Lennon's death could not definitively end the hopes of a Beatles reunion. Two "new" singles based on unreleased demo tapes by John were released; "Free as a Bird," in 1995, and "Real Love," in 1996. Both featured John singing with backing instrumentation and vocals from his former bandmates; they were produced—after George Martin declined the job—by Electric Light Orchestra's Jeff Lynne, Harrison's partner in the Traveling Wilburys.

JOHN AND SEAN IN THE STUDIO during the recording of *Double Fantasy*, John's comeback album after five years of self-imposed retirement. Named after a flower, *Double Fantasy* was a joint effort with Yoko and was released November 17, 1980, three weeks before John's death. Opposite: John and Yoko in August 1980 at the Hit Factory, where *Double Fantasy* was recorded.

FANS OUTSIDE THE DAKOTA IN New York City, where John was murdered on December 8, 1980, by Mark David Chapman, for whom John had autographed a *Double Fantasy* LP earlier that day. Opposite: A vigil in Central Park six days later.

Harrison would nearly suffer the same fate as Lennon. An intruder entered Harrison's 120-room Victorian estate in England—Friar Park, which he called "Crackerbox Palace"—in the middle of a night in 1999. In the ensuing confrontation, the man almost succeeded in stabbing Harrison to death. He narrowly survived, but died of lung cancer two years later, on November 29, 2001, in Los Angeles. He was 58. "We were school friends together," McCartney said when the news broke, "and we joined the Beatles together, and [we] went through all of that *together.*" Of the four young men who knew what it was to be a Beatle, only two remained.

Ringo Starr, among his many other distinctions, would become known to children as the narrator of the first two series of the animated program *Thomas & Friends.* Even after 50 years, it is not yet possible to catalogue all that the Beatles have wrought, only what they have wrought *so far,* a list that includes arena rock, stadium anthems, boy bands, concept albums, and long hair.

When the tsunami of cheering subsided, McCartney asked his once and FOREVER BANDMATE: "You ready to rock?"

Since the breakup of the Beatles, McCartney has had 23 Top 10 solo hits, including nine at No. 1. Several of those songs he made with his first wife and sometime bandmate, Linda, who died in 1998. (Paul's former girlfriend, Jane Asher, married the artist Gerald Scarfe, perhaps best known for his cover and accompanying illustrations for Pink Floyd's album *The Wall.*)

In 2007, when McCartney was 64, the age at which he imagined himself, while still a teenager, renting a cottage on the Isle of Wight, he spoke to *The New Yorker* about his improbable existence. "I am amazed," he said. "How could I not be? Unless I just totally blocked it off. There were four people in the Beatles, and I was one of them. There were two people in the Lennon-McCartney songwriting team, and I was one of them. I mean, right there, that's enough for anyone's life. And there was one guy who wrote 'Yesterday,' and I was him. One guy who wrote 'Let It Be,' 'Fool on the Hill,' CONTINUED ON PAGE 92

WHY?

SURVIVING BEATLES
Paul and Ringo performed at an Earth Day event on April 16, 1993.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 88 'Lady Madonna'—and I was him, too. All of these things would be enough for anyone's life. So to be involved in all of them is pretty surprising. And you have to pinch yourself."

George Martin died, at 90, in 2016. "If anyone earned the title of the fifth Beatle," Paul said, "it was George."

McCartney continues to perform, and in the summer of 2019 wrapped up his North American tour on a gorgeous summer evening in Los Angeles, in venerable Dodger Stadium, site of the Beatles' penultimate live stadium concert in 1966, the night before their San Francisco farewell. Paul closed the show, as he almost always does, with "Hey Jude," a sing-along for more than 55,000 people—teenagers, great grandparents, a sea of the middle-aged—almost every one of them reciting the lyrics by heart and waving smartphone flashlights.

That summer of 2019, a major motion picture was released called *Yesterday*. Its central conceit was this: Imagine the Beatles never existed, requiring a suspension of disbelief as great as that for any Marvel movie, for there is now more Beatles music more widely available than at any time in history. The Beatles channel on Sirius XM is all Beatles all the time—or as the slogan has it, "24/8," a wry nod to "Eight Days a Week." The Beatles now stream on Apple music after the settling of a decades-long trademark dispute with another corporation named Apple, whose founder, Steve Jobs, once said: "My model of business is the Beatles. They were four very talented guys who kept each other's . . . negative tendencies in check. They balanced each other. And . . . the total was greater than the sum of the parts."

Closing out his Dodger Stadium concert in July 2019, Paul said: "He says you want some more," referring to a roadie who had just handed him his famous Hofner bass. "Okay, we can do that." And then, after playing the Beatles' "Birthday" for anyone in the audience celebrating that night, McCartney announced: "We've got a surprise for us, a surprise for you, a surprise for everyone. Ladies and gentlemen, the one and only . . ." Billy Shears? No: "Ringo Starr." When the tsunami of cheering subsided ever so slightly, McCartney asked his once and forever bandmate: "You ready to rock?"

"I'm ready to rock," Ringo replied, heading to his drum kit, 53 years after he and Paul were last on stage here together, and nearly 50 years after their first band had broken up. Then the two living Beatles, still known around the world and across the universe, played "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band" and "Helter Skelter" to a mass outbreak of flashlights and goose bumps.

"I love you, man," Ringo said to Paul, and Paul replied: "I love you, man. Peace and love, Ringo. *Forever.*" ●

PAUL—BY NOW *SIR* PAUL—inducted Ringo into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland in 2015. Opposite: Paul performed an outdoor concert at the Ed Sullivan Theater on July 15, 2009, his first appearance at the venue since the Beatles performed on *The Ed Sullivan Show* on February 9, 1964.

LIFE

The Beatles

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YES, I'M GONNA BE A STAR
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MUSICIANS PERFORMED WITH inductee Ringo Starr during the 30th Annual Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony on April 18, 2015, in Cleveland.

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THAT MAGIC FEELING, NOWHERE TO GO
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LADS AT WORK

PHOTOGRAPH © HARRY BENSON 1964

In their suite at the Hotel George V, Paris, 1964.

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